BING

Summer
2013

No. 164

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 2013 are:

USA and Canada	US $25 per annum
UK	£15 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£16 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
Rest of World	£18 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::

(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins

(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome, most heartily, to the summer issue of BING magazine! And summer itself is welcome to those of us in the upper Midwest area of the United States who, after one of the coldest and snowiest winters in recent years, are grateful to finally be able to enjoy some warmer weather. But with these warmer temperatures came much severe weather in May, including devastating tornadoes in and around Oklahoma. Our thoughts and fervent prayers are with those whose lives have been forever changed by the wrath and destruction of Mother Nature at her worst.

On a happier note, we're excited about the worldwide arrangement Universal Music Enterprises (which encompasses the MCA / Decca catalog) has entered into with HLC Properties, Ltd (the administrator for the Bing Crosby estate) to market and distribute Bing Crosby recordings. There will be more details about this wonderful news later in this issue. Suffice it to say, this can only mean new material should be on its way soon to your CD and DVD players! The venture kicked off in March with Universal reissues of the former Collector's Choice Music CD releases of a few years back. Fantastic to have these great albums of rare, previously unreleased Crosby material back in print, so if you missed them the first time around (or would like to purchase additional copies), get them while you can.

And speaking of new material, our friends at Sepia Records continue to release some wonderful compilations of Bing's recordings and radio work that are well worth adding to your collections. We have details in *Keeping Track*.

I'm sure you'll be pleased to know that one of Bing's co-stars in not one, not two, but THREE of his feature films in the 1930's (1933's *College Humor*, 1937's *Double Or Nothing*, and 1938's *Dr. Rhythm*), Mary Carlisle is still very much with us, and still quite active at age 99 (or 101 depending on the source). On May 8th, there was a tribute to the Hollywood Canteen at the Hollywood American Legion Post 43, and Mary and Marsha Hunt were awarded with trophies during the tribute for the time they spent volunteering at Hollywood Canteen, along with American Legion honorary memberships. Mary did a tiny dance as she made her way on stage, and spoke a few thank you words at the microphone. Amazing!

The 110th anniversary of Bing's birth was marked on May 3rd with several fine tributes, and now Bing's youngest brother Bob Crosby will join the centennial club on August 13th (he passed away in 1993). Both of these momentous occasions are covered in this issue.

And for more on what else is covered within these pages, I turn the page over to my esteemed co-editor Malcolm.

Greg Van Beek **tvanbeek@execpc.com**

The big news is that we have two very welcome CD releases from Bing Crosby Enterprises namely *Bing Sings the Johnny Mercer Songbook* and an expanded version of *Le Bing*. You will find more details about the CDs and some wonderful new radio programmes on a subsequent page. Sepia will be issuing a new Bing CD too and a separate insert is enclosed about this.

The Universal link announcement and the information about the new releases was also circulated by email to those members whose email addresses I hold. If you would like to go on my mailing list for future news updates, let me know. I promise not to bombard you with 'spam'.

We welcome Richard Baker who has kindly agreed to take over from Ken Crossland on the *Keeping Track* section leaving Ken free to write a separate column. Richard is the compiler of the wonderful Bing discography on the Internet so he already watches all new releases very closely. Ken's first submission entitled "Crosbyana" will be found later in this issue and he is joined by all the regulars who come up with their usual wide variety of articles. Norman Wolfe writes about his meeting with Bob back in 1991 and there are other bits and pieces too. I never cease to be amazed by just how much material is available for each magazine.

The annual Leeds gathering will take place on October 6th and I have some very interesting material including some rare items which have been supplied by Greg Van Beek. I look forward to meeting as many of you there as possible.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

In my last report, I drew members' attention to our finances and I am very pleased to confirm that members have been most generous with their donations when renewing their subscriptions. UK members' donations were acknowledged in the last issue of BING and this time around we say thank you to our North American benefactors who have contributed the magnificent sum of $2,085 (£1,330). Without members' donations we would long ago have had to increase our subscriptions so please continue to be generous in the coming years.

The CD *Bing Crosby in the Hall* has been very well received by around 350 members and continues to attract orders. There are still around 400 members who have not placed an order and I wonder why this is? The material is well recorded given its vintage and Bing is at his best vocally on these rare tracks. I look forward to more orders from our reluctant members.

The forthcoming Armed Forces CD is a gem and there will be many tracks that most members will not have heard. The quality is excellent for the majority of the recordings and Bing is fluent and melodious as he entertains the troops. Please buy the CD and support the ICC and those who have made the CD possible.

Malcolm and Ken's opus on Rosemary Clooney is now available and I urge all members to buy a copy of their book which will have generous references to Bing and his support for Rosemary over many years. See *Trading Post* for further details.

DONATIONS

We very much appreciate the financial help provided by the following generous members from: -

CANADA

Alan Matheson, Scott Payne, Don Roegele, Britton Smith

UNITED STATES

Scott Ables, William Alldread, Thomas Chevrette, James Clifford, Doris Conway, Howard Crosby, Philip Crosland, Milton Cummings, David Currie, Stanley Diebel, Anthony DiFlorio, Laurence Doyle, Joseph Duncan, Helen Feiereisen, Ron Field, Arne Fogel, David Foe, Rev. Jerome Heyman, John Holland, Michael Keiser, Laurence Kieran, Albert Koenig, Marcie Kukla, Robert Larsson, Joyce Lundberg, Dale Meyers, Ralph Morris, Paul Murphy, Al O'Hagan, Edward Press, Rev. Eugene Roberts, Judy Schmid, Marq Stankowski, Michael Strada, Robert Stratiff, Greg Van Beek, Charles Van Riper, Charles Vincent, Ben Whiteley, Norman Wolfe, Judy Wysokowski

UNITED KINGDOM

Jim Reilly, Bob Davies, John Marshall, Seamus Kelly, Dennis Saville, Harry C. Ross, Ken Shaw, Arthur Blood, Nicolas Morrison, Johnny Jones.

We thank our beneficiaries for their continuing support.

DEATHS

Sadly, we have learned of the death of **June Manton** our member from Thrapston, Northamptonshire in the UK. June was an enthusiastic member of the club and came to Leeds for our annual tribute to Bing, always accompanied by her husband, Gordon. Gordon has suffered ill health in the past few years and we extend our sincere condolences to him and his family on their sad loss.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 1 to 10

These attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50 and the price for Europe £8.50. Members in the US & Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand

from David Currington. The price for members in the rest of the world is £9.50.

Note: The small price uplift reflects the increased postal costs in the UK.

BING CROSBY in the Kraft Music Hall

Bing Crosby in the Hall and our KMH 75th Anniversary Tribute CDs remain available from your secretary priced at £7.50.

LEEDS 2013 (48th meeting)

Sunday October 6th is the date for your diary and the usual notice about the meeting can be found towards the end of the magazine. Please book now for our annual tribute to Bing and I look forward to seeing familiar and new faces at what has always turned out to be a most enjoyable event.

Michael Crampton **mdcrampton@gmail.com**

Bing Crosby Enterprises and HLC Properties, Ltd. Announce New SiriusXM Satellite Radio Series and Two New CD Releases

LOS ANGELES, CA – June 28, 2013 — *Bing's Basement*, a series of 12 monthly one-hour radio specials comprised of rare and unknown material from Bing Crosby's extensive tape archive, as well as more familiar Crosby recordings, premieres July 4th on SiriusXM Satellite Radio on channel 4 (40s on 4.)

The shows feature never-before-available music, as well as highlights and guests from Crosby's long radio career – including his time as a disc jockey in the 1940s and 1950s. Radio personality Arne Fogel hosts the series, which kicks off with an Independence Day show. *Bing's Basement* debuted on SiriusXM with two one-hour Christmas specials in December 2012.

This fall The Bing Crosby Archive will release two new CDs through Universal Music Enterprises. *Bing Sings the Johnny Mercer Songbook* is a new CD compilation celebrating Bing Crosby's recordings of songs composed by his friend and frequent collaborator, Johnny Mercer. The recordings span more than two decades – starting with a rare 1934 radio performance of "P.S. I Love You." Other highlights include "Lazy Bones," a duet with Louis Armstrong, and several of Bing's Decca hits like "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," which features the Andrews Sisters, and "Mr. Meadowlark," a duet with Mercer. Also included among the 22 selections are 10 previously unissued recordings, including "That Old Black Magic," "Jeepers Creepers," "Glow Worm," and "Autumn Leaves."

The CD release of *Le Bing: Song Hits of Paris – 60th Anniversary Deluxe Edition* will be the first-ever reissue of Bing Crosby's first LP. The original 1953 release, recorded in Paris with Bing singing in French, was an eight song, 10" album and one of the first concept albums ever made. Bing's French language recordings include "La Vie En Rose" and "Mademoiselle de Paris." The anniversary edition expands *Le Bing* to 24 tracks – 15 never before released – including rare studio outtakes, and several English language bonus tracks including a pair of Cole Porter favorites, "I Love Paris" and "Allez Vous En (Go Away.)"

Bob Hope and Bing Crosby Double Feature! Illustrated Talk & Screening!

Our own Maureen Solomon delivered an illustrated presentation on the *Road* films at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood in March. The press release read as follows.

ROAD TO MOROCCO / ROAD TO UTOPIA
Sun, March 17 • 5:00pm Egyptian Theater - Hollywood

Bob Hope and Bing Crosby are a pair of stowaways who fall under the amorous eyes of Princess Shalmar and invoke the ire of an Arabian sheik (Anthony Quinn) in *Road to Morocco*, the third in the series of ROAD pictures; in the fourth installment *Road to Utopia*, they're turn-of-the-century vaudevillians who get their hands on the map to a gold mine and head to the Klondike! The program begins with an illustrated presentation from Maureen Solomon on the Road movies of Bob Hope and Bing Crosby.

Hope and Crosby starred in several popular "Road" comedies during the 1940s and '50s and two of their best — 1942's "Road to Morocco" and 1946's "Road to Utopia"—screen late Sunday afternoon at the American Cinematheque's Egyptian Theatre.

****

Maureen wrote to me saying:

> "My presentation with photos at the Egyptian Theater went very well. People asked questions, and told me they learned a lot about Bing and Bob that they never knew before. I did place special emphasis on Bing's career. I spoke for 25 minutes before they showed *Road to Morocco* and *Road to Utopia.*"

Well done, Maureen!

All "Roads" lead to Rancho Cucamonga

In our last issue, we mentioned the Bing and Bob Hope tributes being mounted by Bob Pasch and Lynn Roberts and we now have reports of another presentation in April in Rancho Cucamonga (a suburban city in San Bernardino County, California). Diane Sholley writing in the *Daily Bulletin* tells us more.

Though Bob Hope and Bing Crosby are gone, their classic brand of entertainment lives on and will take

centerstage Sunday (Apr 28) at Rancho Cucamonga's Lewis Family Playhouse.

"Bob & Bing - The Road Back to Cucamonga!" stars Lynn "Win" Roberts as Bob Hope and Bob Pasch as Bing Crosby.

The show is presented in the form of a 1940s NBC broadcast, offering audiences an opportunity to return to the golden days of radio.

The pair, experts at repartee, will be joined by legendary radio guest stars Jack Benny, Red Skelton and Jimmy Durante, all courtesy of Roberts.

"As an entertainer I have played to audiences of all ages in all kinds of settings from national television to small private parties," Roberts said. "It is always such a joy for me to see the responses of those present and to hear the laughter and applause which to every entertainer is a big part of our compensation. "

Roberts has been an entertainer for more than 30 years, performing all over the United States and through Europe. He's been on national and local television and radio broadcasts. He's performed for corporate events, cruises, fairs, concerts, educational seminars, commercials and has emceed for various events.

Pasch, who also has delighted audiences for more than 30 years, not only looks like Bing Crosby, but sounds like the immortal crooner.

According to his website, his tribute shows are endorsed by Kathryn Crosby, Bing's widow and by all the major Bing Crosby Fan Clubs.

Pasch began his "Bing Crosby Tribute" in 1978, one year after Bing's death, performing throughout the United States and Australia in stage shows, dinner theaters and a variety of special events.

Diana Sholley

(Editor: As we were finishing off this edition we received a report of another successful show by Bob Pasch and Lynn Roberts at Fort Morgan in Colorado. Keep up the good work, men!)

Fan clubs keep the flame alive for stars fading from memory

This was the heading to a long article by Mackenzie Carpenter in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on May 19 which looked at various fan clubs. The front cover of BING#162 was shown and the writer continued, inter alia:

Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Doris Day. Bing Crosby. The stars of another era have their devoted followers...

...Then there's Bing Crosby.

He lives on through repeated showings of *White Christmas* and on the Internet. There's bingcrosby.com, his own "official" Web page and other assorted sites.

Crosby, who died in 1977, has his own glossy quarterly magazine called—what else?—BING, published by The International Club Crosby, which claims to be the world's longest-running fan club "as recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records."

Judging by the photos in BING, the print magazine's demographic is heavily male, with a strong emphasis on the Greatest Generation—World War II veterans who loved the bass-baritone crooner for his morale-boosting trips to entertain the troops.

When that generation passes on, it is entirely possibly that BING will sing its swan song—or at least go digital...

Mackenzie Carpenter

(Editor: I thanked the writer for the mention of our club and I did not initially bother to correct him about our demographic. The issue he saw - BING #162 - just happened to be the one containing a long article about Bing in France in 1944. However there was appropriate comment on the Crosby Fan World site (see below) which I duly fed back to Mr. Carpenter.

Richard Baker: Nice mention of the ICC here. But apparently we are all (1) WWII veterans. Really? and (2) male. I can remember the war, just, but am far from being a "veteran" and I know many fans who are considerably younger than me! I also know of considerable numbers of female fans.

Carmela Amari: The last time I checked I was a female. Females always swooned when Bing crooned and still do!

Emily: Some pretty sweeping generalizations in that article; I'm a 26 year old female.

Kevin: Phew, Emily....I'm glad you commented about age, cause I was feeling a bit guilty, as I can only vaguely remember the Falklands War, never mind WWII. I was 4 years old when Bing died.....and I now have a six year old that can sing 'Swanee' from hearing it on "Crosby on Broadway"....so point being...I think there's a bit of life in the BC legacy yet....)

(Editor: The following day Rich Kienzle posted a note on the Community Voices blog of the Post-Gazette.)

Bing Crosby: Beyond the Fan Club

Mackenzie Carpenter offered an interesting look at the fan clubs of long-deceased pop culture figures, Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald, Doris Day, Ava Gardner, Clayton Moore (the Lone Ranger) and Bing Crosby.

The article made some excellent points, though in Crosby's case, things aren't quite as simple. True, his fan base, especially those who grew up as fans, is fast shrinking. Beyond that, however, Crosby's career remains the subject of substantive study beyond fan clubs, transcending the popularity of "White Christmas" or the "Road" comedies with Bob Hope.

One reason Crosby's appeal transcends fan clubs is his importance to the history of popular music, as important in its day as Sinatra's or Elvis Presley's was later on. The truth is, the young Bing was far more

revolutionary at the start than today's view of him as a safe, conservative artist, with a reputation for boozy hell raising at times.

Thinking of Bing as a businessman is a major part of his story. Everyone here knows he was part-owner of the Pirates. Fewer realize he also helped finance (to the tune of $50,000 in 1947 dollars) the then-revolutionary multi-track Ampex tape recorders that changed recording in the 1940's until digital came along. Les Paul got one of the first models.

In the 1920's, as one-third of the Rhythm Boys with Al Rinker and Harry Barris, Bing and his bass-baritone brought the relaxed, swinging jazz vocal stylings of Louis Armstrong and black vocal groups to a wider audience.

This bit from the 1929 film *King of Jazz* starring the Paul Whiteman Orchestra (the Rhythm Boys' home base) was shot in experimental color at the time. The music may sound tame now but it was cutting-edge at the time. Al Rinker is at the piano. *(Editor: A link to a video of "So the Bluebirds etc" was given at this point.)*

The Rhythm Boys in *King of Jazz*.

Locally, Mike Plaskett, co-host of WESA's Rhythm Sweet and Hot is a Crosby scholar who's taught courses on Crosby at Pitt and on Whiteman at CMU.

Jazz critic and essayist Gary Giddins published *Pocketful of Dreams: the Early Years, 1903-1940,* first of a two-volume Bing biography, in 2001. He's still at work on Volume 2 now. Giddins reveals what other Crosby books (pro and con) have hinted at: a pioneer performer and a complex, imperfect human being beneath his facade of casual nonchalance.

European record reissuers and collectors have been mining Crosby music for decades, resulting in sets of releases that essentially summarize his entire recording career session by session in chronological order, with copious liner notes and info about the musicians on the date, etc. This series, from Britain, is the best-known. *(Editor: A link to Crissi Newton's listing of the Jonzo albums was given here.)*

Earlier this year, Universal Music Group released an entire series of Crosby CD's from various sources, many of them thematic, one a stunning set of radio performances with his friend Rosemary Clooney, who starred in *White Christmas* with him when she was the hottest young pop singer of the day. The Official Crosby Website has all the relevant information.

Between 1954 and 1956 Crosby did a series of pre-recorded radio shows in Hollywood for CBS with a small combo. The jazz reissue label Mosaic released that material in its entirety (160 songs on 7 CD's) last year in a $119 box set. According to their website, it's out of stock and a new shipment is expected later this year.

It's safe to say while his earliest fans and his fan club magazine may fade, as Mackenzie's story rightly noted, Crosby fans will endure, and serious, even scholarly studies of him will continue.

Rich Kienzle

A Tribute to Bing Crosby

For those who live near the Milwaukee area, there'll be a wonderful opportunity to see Bing on the big screen from July to September. Local film historian Dale Kuntz presents selections from his rare collection of classic films from the 30s and 40's, screened from original 16mm prints. Voted one of the 10 best things to do under $10 in Milwaukee, Dale's Movie Time film series is shown every other Wednesday at the Charles Allis Art Museum, a beautiful Tudor-style mansion on the lower East Side of Milwaukee that was built in 1911. The Home is intact with original furnishings and an art collection spanning more than 2,000 years. The films being shown are **Mississippi** (July 17), **Waikiki Wedding** (July 31), **Road to Morocco** (August 14), **Dixie** (August 28; film shown in sepia tone), **Road to Utopia** (September 11), and **Holiday Inn** (September 25). For more information, visit http://www.charlesallis.org/movietime.html

(Editor: Whilst on the subject of Bing on the big screen, the Syracuse Cinephile Society holds a Monday night series of films and they closed their spring series by showing the rare film *Duffy's Tavern* on June 10 at the Spaghetti Warehouse in Syracuse, NY. They described it as follows:

DUFFY'S TAVERN (1945). Director: Hal Walker. Cast: Ed Gardner, Barry Sullivan, Victor Moore, Marjorie Reynolds, Eddie Green, Charlie Cantor, Ann Thomas. Based

on the popular radio program, featuring the radio cast and including a big musical-comedy variety show with many of Paramount's top stars of the day (Bing Crosby, Betty Hutton, Dorothy Lamour, Brian Donlevy, Eddie Bracken, Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake, Paulette Goddard, Robert Benchley, Diana Lynn, Cass Daley, Billy DeWolfe and others). A fun season finale!)

Bing Crosby said I was too young to marry him

Back in April, the UK's *Daily Express* newspaper carried a fine article by Nick Dalton about Kathryn Crosby which we are delighted to share with you now.

The snow, the seasonal good cheer and the mountains cried out romance. It was a fine day to take a stroll and as Bing Crosby meandered along he spotted Kathryn Grant, a young actress who hadn't even been born when he was first a star.

"I became aware of someone behind me and he touched his chair to the back of my knee so I flopped down unceremoniously," she says, recalling an unlikely start to a relationship that was to last almost a quarter of a century and touch her for the rest of her days.

What made it even more unlikely was that under the warmth of the California sun and after their meeting Crosby, king of stage and screen, ambled back on set to continue filming *White Christmas*, one of Hollywood's best-loved movies of all time.

Crosby died in 1977 following a British tour but May 3 would have been his 110th birthday, an anniversary celebrated by the release of 11 albums, including some material which has never previously been heard. "I'm terribly proud," says Kathryn, his champion down the years. "The people who loved him will still love him and their children will love him. He sang about everything in every style."

Crosby was the all-round entertainer who revolutionised television, music and film with not only his acting and singing talents but also his entrepreneurial and business sense.

He created the buddy movie in the *Road To…* series with chum Bob Hope, pioneered the pre-recording of radio shows, set up his own businesses and put his money into fledgling tape-to-tape technology which went on to fuel the entertainment industry until the digital era.

But to Kathryn, 79, he was simply a huge star. "I was so innocent, just out from Texas. I asked him if he liked baseball. I didn't know that he owned the Pittsburgh Pirates, a big baseball team. And then I asked if he liked race horses. Again I didn't know that he'd built Del Mar racetrack in California. There was so much of his life that I didn't know about. He was very happy with my ignorance and then we discovered the world together…"

Kathryn had actually auditioned for a role in *White Christmas*. "But they said I was too young and pretty – something they said to everyone!"

She was only 20, 30 years younger than Crosby and the same age as the eldest of his four sons Gary, by singer and actress Dixie Lee, who had died from cancer in 1952 after 22 years of marriage. "We had a wonderful first date. We just sat and drank tea. This was across the street from Paramount, a little place called Lucy's.

"We only ever had romantic dates. I went to Palm Springs to swim in the pool at his house. On the way back he invited me to the Academy Awards. It was a week away and he said, 'Do you think you can find a long dress?' So I ran back to Columbia Pictures, where I was working and they offered me the dress Rita Hayworth wore in *Gilda*, the most gorgeous, long, satin dress you ever saw, complete with full-length opera gloves. But it just didn't work because I was very young so I found something more appropriate."

Kathryn with Bing at the Academy Awards in 1955.

Crosby was nominated for best actor as an alcoholic singer in *The Country Girl*. He didn't win but costar Grace Kelly took best actress.

It was four years before he and Kathryn married. "He was afraid. I was a lot younger than he was. But it made no difference at all because I was kind of precocious. I went to university at 16 and Hollywood at 18."

By the time they wed in 1957 Kathryn too was making a name for herself in Hollywood, starring

opposite Tony Curtis in the Blake Edwards-directed romance *Mister Cory* and with Jack Lemmon in comedy *Operation Mad Ball*. She cemented her star status the following year as Princess Parisa in 1958's special effects-laden *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*. And then she all but disappeared from the silver screen. So was it a case of abandoning her career in favour of family life? "Not really," she says. "I just kept having children."

They had three: Mary, who became an actress and found fame as Kristin Shepard, the woman responsible for shooting JR in *Dallas*; Nathaniel, who became a golfer and won the 1981 US Amateur Championship; and Harry, who appeared in the horror movie *Friday The 13th* but went on to become an investment banker.

Life with Crosby was non-stop, travelling with him around the world on a breathless cycle of work and fun, the two often overlapping, including a visit to England to film *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962). While the seven movies in the series provided adventure, laughs, romance and music they also showcased the comic chemistry between Crosby and Bob Hope to perfection.

"I had a dinner party one night and invited Bob and his wife Dolores," Kathryn recalls. Hope and Crosby initially sat apart. "They sat across the table from each other but a little separated and dinner was proceeding properly then I moved around so they were sitting next to each other and everything just started going off like a fire-cracker," she says.

"They were just so funny. All the jokes, all the remarks to each other. Everyone was laughing hysterically."

Even when he was in his 70s, Crosby continued with his busy schedule and was regularly in Britain, recording and performing. In autumn 1977 he was here making his final album *Seasons*, a Christmas television special that featured his unlikely duet "The Little Drummer Boy" with David Bowie, and a session for the BBC. There were also concerts, including two weeks at the London Palladium.

"We sang as a family, with the children and also with Rosemary Clooney, with whom he sang lots of wonderful duets," says Kathryn.

"We visited friends and then he went off to Spain with pals to shoot some grouse. I went home to go to the dentist – rather prosaic but there you are. Then I got word from the ambassador. He was playing golf in Spain and won the match. They said, 'Are you tired?' and he said 'No', and he fell – and it was over."

Crosby, 74, died from a heart attack, four days after his final concert.

Kathryn's anguish was compounded when Gary wrote a book accusing his father of being abusive, both verbally and physically, and claiming that he was regularly beaten with a metal-studded belt.

The claims were dismissed by Gary's brothers, two of whom later committed suicide while suffering from depression. Says Kathryn: "He loved his sons. He loved them all. People who watched him in movies knew exactly what he was like because that was what he put on the screen. He was the most comfortable man you could ever know, someone you'd like to go fishing with. When Gary was sober he knew what a wonderful man his father was."

What was never in doubt was Crosby's unrivalled showbusiness success. He appeared in more than 100 films. He starred in radio shows for nearly 30 years, remained a hit on television for 25 years and had well over 300 chart singles, including more than 40 No.1s. He recorded nearly 2,000 songs during the course of his career but Kathryn says there are many more to be heard.

"The basement's full of them!" she laughs.

Nick Dalton

Famous For Quality The World Over

Greg Van Beek has another hobby which arose from his liking of Bing.

I'm sure each of us, if prodded enough, can pinpoint exactly what it was that first made you aware of the many talents of one Harry Lillis Crosby. For some, it may be a song heard on the radio, or seeing one of his movies perhaps. Maybe you were even fortunate enough to see him perform live. Whatever it was, it most certainly left quite an impression, and left you wanting to hear more from those golden tonsils.

For me, it was an antique radio, of all things, that led to my discovering the name Bing Crosby. As a young boy back in the 1970's, I used to visit my great-grandparents, who lived in the same house my grandmother grew up in back in the 1930's. The entire house seemed forever frozen in time to that era. Whenever I'd visit, great-grandma would drag a well worn cardboard box out of the hall closet that contained well worn all metal toys. My favorites were the toy cars, which, judging by their running boards and large fenders, were based on 1930's designs. No doubt they were used by my grandmother and her siblings all those years before. And sitting in the corner of their front room, right across from my great-grandfather's easy chair, was a big imposing console radio. I can remember walking up to it, always intrigued by the large wooden bars over the speaker in front, and the many push-buttons and knobs surrounding the large rectangular dial that I had to strain to reach up to touch. It was a Coronado, which I (much) later learned were sold via Gamble-Skogmo stores and were common sets

in the Great Plains region of the United States.

Around 1980, my great-grandparents were getting along in years and were in need of an assisted living facility. Once they were relocated, it was agreed to sell their no-longer used house and its contents. My grandmother was involved with the disposal of the estate, and asked my parents if there was anything we'd like as a remembrance. I immediately chimed in with "I'd love that big old radio!" And so it was, arriving in our driveway, via the trunk of my grandparent's Oldsmobile, not long after.

Lucky for this then 8 year-old that his father happened to study radio and television repair as part of his studies in electrical engineering in college, and he was able to get the long dormant radio to sputter back to life again. I thought this was just the greatest thing since Stretch Armstrong! Around that time, the local Sentry grocery store had a display near the check out aisles of old time radio shows on cassette tape for sale from a company called Radio Reruns. After finding out from my dad that before TV, this is what people would listen to, and that no doubt my great-grandparents listened to some of these very shows on that very Coronado radio was all I needed to hear. I had to start collecting them right then and there! My first tape was *The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show...* which led to my receiving a Charlie McCarthy ventriloquist dummy for Christmas that year... followed by tapes of *You Bet Your Life* starring Groucho Marx, *Amos 'n Andy*, Jack Benny, and more throughout the next year or so.

Greg's first Philco – the 46-1203.

Then it happened. That momentous moment that forever changed my life. It was a Sunday morning in January of 1982, on the way to my grandparents' house for a noon meal when we stopped off at the local Rexall drug store for some reason and I discovered they too had a similar display of radio shows on cassette available for purchase. Flipping through the rack of tapes, I discovered one titled *The Bing Crosby Show*. Bing? That name certainly didn't register in my memory. When my Dad told me he sang and hosted a variety show, I decided to take a chance and spend my hard earned $3.98 on the tape. After all, the rest of my radio show collection amounted to comedy and drama shows. Not a show hosted by a singer. I listened to it that morning before dinner at my grandparents' house, holding their little single speaker portable cassette tape player to my ear for 30 minutes. Wow, what a voice! The way he spoke sounded warm and inviting. Comforting. And the way he sang was so effortless it was like an extension of his speaking voice. From that point on, I was hooked, and the rest, as they say, is history.

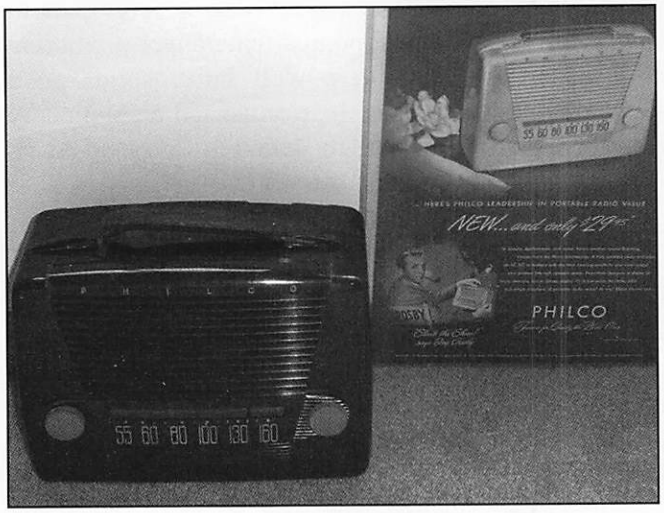
That same year, 1982, I added a second antique radio to go along with the Coronado console. This one was discovered at an estate sale of a relative of a friend of my family. It was a table model, with a lid that lifted up to reveal a phonograph that only played those "glass" records my great-grandmother told me about that were so fragile. I had to have it! But this wasn't a Coronado. It was something called a Philco. A Philco model 46-1203 to be exact. Not long after, I learned from a friend of my parents, who also had some antique radios, that the first two digits of the serial number on Philco radios manufactured after 1937 indicated the year the set was made. So this was a 1946 Philco! I never could find an exact date for the Coronado, so this was even better! The radio portion still worked, which was great, but the phonograph did not. All it needed was a new cartridge on the tone arm and soon that was working again too. Today, 30 years later, it still works.

This purchase triggered an interest in Philco radios that endures to this day. In fact, it's now the only brand I collect. I currently own over two dozen antique Philco radios, ranging from 1933 to 1949. Over half of them, 13 to be exact, span the years 1946 to 1949. Why just those 4 years you ask? Three words: *Philco Radio Time*, Bing's Wednesday night prime-time ABC radio network variety show that made history as the first transcribed (pre-recorded) major network show. Many of the sets I own are featured on the Philco shows in commercial spots, as announcer Ken Carpenter extols the virtues of each model. Two sets stand out above all others in terms of exposure; the Philco portable, and the Philco 1201.

Philco portables - 1946 model (left), 1948 model (right).

The 1946 Philco portable (model 46-350) was revolutionary in that it used circuitry that was developed during the war for use in walkie talkies, featuring miniature sized tubes that made much smaller, more compact radios possible. They were especially useful in automobiles, where radios could now be integrated into the dashboard, as opposed to being situated in a box located below it. This portable featured a tambour style lid that was very reminiscent of a roll top desk, which would cover up the dial and controls, making a more streamlined appearance.

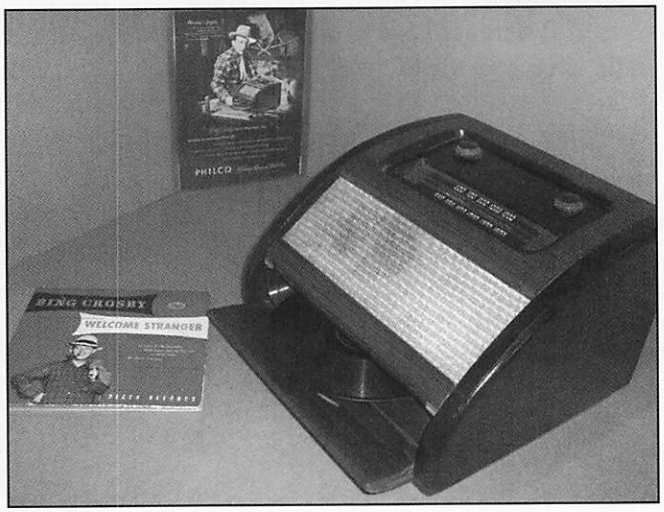
These sets could be used both AC & DC, meaning they could either be plugged in a wall outlet like a conventional radio, or operate on battery power. Since the batteries for these sets are long obsolete, it's especially useful to have the option of plugging them in for power today. I have three examples of the Philco portable; the 46-350, a 1948 model 48-300, which is similar to the 1946 model, sans tambour door, and a 1949 model 49-602, which features an all-plastic cabinet (previous years were encased in a particle board type material). The model 602 was also featured in a print ad campaign, featuring Bing seated, puffing his pipe while holding one of these sets in his lap. They remain powerful little radios, even today.



The 49-602

The other radio featured more than any other in advertising during the run of Bing's Philco series was the model 1201, a one-of-a-kind table model radio phonograph that works on the same principle as a CD player in the dashboard of your car; you slide the CD (or record in this case) into a slot and it plays, automatically! Introduced in 1946, it quickly became the biggest selling table model radio-phonograph in the history of the industry. Some 238,723 were sold between 1946 and 1948 (the exact same set was offered each year, either as a model 46-1201, 47-1201, or 48-1201).

The unique 'breadbox' cabinet design uses a series of strings and pulleys connected to the door on the front of the cabinet. When you open the door, the strings lift the tone arm and retract the center spindle, allowing you to slide the record inside. Once you close the door, the center spindle pops back up, locking the record in place, and engaging the turntable. The closing of the door also allows the tone arm to gently rest down on the record and it begins playing. Once the tone arm reaches the end of the record and the 'dead' area between the final grooves and label, a mercury switch automatically senses this position and stops the turntable from spinning. An amazing engineering feat for 1946!



The famous 1201

This radio is so closely associated with Bing (he also appeared in print advertising, picturing him in a rustic cabin setting playing records), that even today among radio collectors, it is known as the "Bing Crosby special". It was later revamped with a more radical looking cabinet, featuring a raised speaker, in 1949 as the model 49-1401, but discontinued after that year, as the more popular (and less easily broken) 45 rpm and 10" long-playing 33 1/3 rpm speeds were just making their debut.

Collecting and restoring these old Philco radios has been a fun hobby for me over the years. I enjoy bringing a shine back to a dull cabinet, and applying new exact reproduction decals and labels to it so that it looks showroom new again. There are even exact reproduction dial scales for many sets being made today as the hobby gains popularity. Tubes and capacitors (and occasionally resistors) are the main components that fail in the electronic portion that causes these old radios to fall silent (or buzz like crazy!), and these too can (usually) be easily found. Some tubes are becoming more difficult to find, however, as years go by.

As an example, one of my most recent Philco acquisitions was purchased August 11, 2012 at an antique radio swap meet in Grayslake, IL. All of my 1946 to 1949 Philcos were table models, until I found this 1947 model 47-1230 console radio-phonograph. This is a desirable model, as it not only has the AM radio and 78 rpm phonograph, but it also has a short wave band and the modern FM radio band, something that

Philco introduced the previous year! The vendor and I quickly agreed on a $35 asking price, which was very cheap (mainly because he didn't want to have to load it up again and take it back home!). This set was in pretty rough shape, as it evidently sat in a few inches of water for a time, resulting in rotted wood around the bottom base of the cabinet. So besides the work it took to get the radio and phonograph to play again, I had a lot of clamping and re-gluing of wood trim to do, in addition to re-staining certain areas of the cabinet. All told, there were 33 different things I had to fix and repair on the set in the five and a half weeks it took to restore it. This includes totally disassembling the phonograph, repainting the base and tone arm, and rewiring portions of it.

The 47-1230

This set features its original, still operational Philco "dynamic reproducer" tone arm, which you may recall Ken Carpenter discussing on a *Philco Radio Time* episode or two. This was the predecessor to the modern magnetic cartridge and needle used on stereo systems. Used for years by the nations' top radio disc jockeys, this was the first time this special cartridge was made available to the public. Prior to this, steel needles were used to play records, and they would quickly wear out after so many plays and require replacement (by loosening a thumbscrew on the front of the tone arm, sliding the old needle out and replacing it with a new one, and retightening the thumbscrew). If these steel needles weren't replaced promptly, they would begin to scratch and cause irreplaceable damage to the records. This more modern, irremovable needle eliminated all of that and produced a much richer, smoother sound that indeed eliminates certain scratches and surface noise.

For me, this is the most enjoyable of all of my Philcos to use, as it literally transports you back in time when doing so. I have an album of original 78 rpm records of some of the hit songs of 1947 (of course, including many by Bing), and I like to stack them up on the automatic record changer and let them play through. It's fun to watch the tone arm rise back up at the end of each record, watch the next one drop down, and then see the tone arm reset itself back at the outer edge. Or you can tilt the front of the cabinet back in and it gives the appearance that these songs are being broadcast over the radio. Either way, you're hearing music being played exactly as one would've played it in 1947, and exactly as it would've sounded to folks back then. I like to call it my Philco time machine. It never fails to bring a smile to anyone who sees me demonstrate it in person for them. If you'd like to see a couple of brief video demonstrations I filmed, search for "1947 Philco Model 47-1230 radio & phonograph demo" and "1947 Philco console radio/phono demonstration" on YouTube.com.

Philco was America's leading radio manufacturer from 1930 until the mid-1950's, and the post-war years were among its most successful, due in large part to having the nation's most popular entertainer promoting their products. They were well built, solid, good sounding units, with many innovative and revolutionary features and designs. Philco definitely lives up to its slogan "famous for quality the world over".

Greg Van Beek

Bob Crosby

This is the centennial year of Bob Crosby's birth and Norman Wolfe shares some memories of the bandleader-singer. His visit with Bob took place May 23, 1991.

"It got so bad that whenever someone asked me what my occupation was I used to answer automatically 'Bing Crosby's brother.'"

Bob Crosby and I were sitting in the living room of his beautiful upper-storey apartment in La Jolla, California, looking out on the Pacific Ocean. La Jolla is one of the most affluent communities in the country, a hilly area winding for about seven miles along the ocean 15 minutes or so north of downtown San Diego and not far from the Del Mar race track which is a big part of his family history.

He graciously had consented to help me with a book I was writing about his brother and we were discussing what living in the shadow of one of the most famous figures of the 20th Century had been like. The name certainly opened doors which otherwise might have remained closed but, at the same time, it invited inevitable comparison to the dominant singer of the era.

The subject didn't seem to bother him so I pursued it a bit further asking him how far he thought he would have gotten if his name had been Bob Harrigan instead of Bob Crosby.

"Probably not very far," he answered and we both chuckled.

He had answered the door himself and I had no difficulty recognizing him because he looked much as I remembered him from television and motion pictures, trim and clear-eyed with hair no longer black but a grayish silver that was quite becoming. He was then 77, the sole survivor of the seven children of Harry Lowe Crosby and Kate Harrigan. "I am," he said, "the last of the Crosbys."

I found him affable and outgoing, an instantly likeable man. It was easy to understand why he had been successful fronting an orchestra and hosting programs on radio and television.

June (Kuhn) Crosby, an attractive woman and his wife of many years, served me a cup of coffee and a slice of blueberry pie and he got up to show me his audio equipment, an impressive assembly of tape decks and speakers covering most of one wall.

He turned on a selection by the band he led during the Big Band Era of the 1930s and '40s and was delighted when I recognized the driving tenor sax of the great Eddie Miller.

A young Bob Crosby visits his brother on the film set of *We're Not Dressing*

The band was formed in 1935 out of the remnants of an orchestra led by the ill-fated Ben Pollack. Pollack's saxophonist, Gil Rodin, was trying to hold it together, after Pollack deserted, and felt it was faceless and in need of a personality to supply an instantly recognizable identity. He had met and liked Crosby, who was then singing with the Dorsey brothers' orchestra, and offered the job to him.

Crosby did not play an instrument and could not read music but his easy manner, good looks and famous surname made "Bob Crosby and the Bobcats" an instant success.

The "Bobcats" actually were an octet within the orchestra and they specialized in New Orleans-Dixieland style jazz music, when just about everybody else was emulating Benny Goodman and playing swing. Over the years, in addition to Miller, the Bobcats included such legendary musicians as Muggsy Spanier, Bob Haggart, Matty Matlock, Charlie Spivak and Billy Butterfield.

Rodin continued to manage the band and was its de facto leader while Crosby infused it with star quality and charm waving a baton and singing an occasional song. His voice was light and pleasant and sounded a good deal like his brother's but without the range or distinctive styling.

Unquestionably, his brother was the inspiration for his career and his early pattern was somewhat the same. He dropped out of Gonzaga in 1931, at the age of 18, to join a trio led by Ray Hendricks, who would go on to success as a vocalist with several big bands including Goodman and Ray Noble.

They played engagements around Spokane, and on one of the local radio stations, much as Bing Crosby and Al Rinker had done a few years earlier. They disbanded after Bing recommended Bob to Anson Weeks, who led a popular dance band playing at major hotels along the West Coast.

That incident gave rise to an enduring Crosby anecdote. Bing is said to have telephoned Weeks, then appearing at the Mark Hopkins Hotel in San Francisco, and saying "Anson, I hear you're looking for a singer." Weeks replied: "Sure, Bing, we can use you. Come on up."

Bob spent the next three years as featured vocalist for Weeks before joining the Dorseys for a year.

The Bobcats flourished up to the time of WWII and were well-liked by jazz aficionados. Two of their recordings, "South Rampart Street Parade" and "Big Noise from Winnetka," the latter with a smooth Crosby vocal, became hits.

They also supported Bing on some of his recordings, the most successful being "San Antonio Rose" in 1940, a million-seller and the first country-western cross-over hit.

Crosby went into the Marine Corps during the war, his musicians scattered and the Big Band era came to a

close. When the war ended, he concentrated on solo work and made several movies. He was successful in radio and television with his own variety programs as well as substituting for Bing on the *Kraft Music Hall* from time to time.

He told me the two were on good terms throughout their lives although they didn't see each other often. He believed his brother coped with his enormous fame by withdrawing from most things. "Bing put himself into a bubble," he said.

Ultimately, despite Bing's omnipresent shadow, or perhaps because of it, Bob carved out a successful and enduring career. He has two stars (television and recording) in the Hollywood Walk of Fame. They say Bob Crosby not Bob Harrigan.

Norman Wolfe

He brought a note of happiness to the ladies

It's amazing where Bing pops up. On May 10, he was mentioned by Ed Adamczyk on the *The Tonawanda News* website in New York State. Mr. Adamczyk had this to say.

A digital photo album exists on the Town of Tonawanda's website. Many of the pictures are historical in nature and from the archives of the Tonawanda-Kenmore Historical Society, but one in particular isn't. Taken from a 1932 newspaper, and under the headline "Crooner Entertains Aged," its caption reads thusly:

"The old folks have not been forgotten by Bing Crosby, famous radio star, during his week in Buffalo. Yesterday Bing brought a note of happiness to the ladies of the Wheel Chair Home in Kenmore. He is shown presenting his audience with a box of sweets in a pre-celebration of Mother's Day."

And there he is, in a bow tie, offering a big box of chocolates to his elderly and female fans.

…Funny, what a person can learn from trolling the Internet. A few generations later, Keanu Reeves shot a movie, and greeted his fans one afternoon for an autograph session, across the street from where Bing Crosby performed. (Yes, Bing did a gig at the Wheel Chair Home. "My Wild Irish Rose" evidently rocked the place.)

The photo, the story, tells a lot. Yeah, celebrities occasionally wander through Kenmore; Woodrow Wilson, Helen Keller, Franklin Roosevelt, a rap artist whose name I forget and recorded some material in Kenmore's Select Sound Studio, the aforementioned Mr. Reeves, all took care of some business here.

It also speaks of the way stardom was done in the old days. A guy like Bing Crosby, as big a star as could be found in the radio days (and movies and recordings, and later television), came to Buffalo for a week to promote, to generate interest, to generally beat the drum for his next project, then moved on to another city of similar size and clout.

Ed Adamczyk

Editor: The book 'Bing Crosby – Day by Day' has the following entry for Bing's visit to Buffalo in 1932.

1932

April 29–May 5, Friday–Thursday. Appears in a cine-variety show at Shea's Buffalo in Buffalo, New York, for the week.

> Right off the ether waves comes Bing Crosby, crooning baritone, to stop shows at the Buffalo. Singing three songs in that particular husky baritone of his own, and much imitated, the young man from Washington found his audience hadn't enough. He had to do two more, in the course of which he introduced a guitarist as accompanist. Charles Manning's background music makes the program all the more enjoyable. Crosby will grow on this town. (*Buffalo Courier Express*, April 30, 1932)

Ancestral home of crooner Bing Crosby found in Cork

Eoin English, writing in the *Irish Examiner* on May 4 had some important news.

He is one of the most iconic recording artists of the 20th century and his influence shaped the global entertainment industry. Now one of Bing Crosby's biggest fans believes he has pinpointed, for the first time, the ruins of the legendary crooner's ancestral home in West Cork.

The news emerged yesterday on the 110th anniversary of Bing's birth.

Dr Noel Buckley, an historical archivist who lives in Cork City, said if the site of Bing's ancestral home just outside Schull was developed, it could become a huge

attraction for his legions of fans around the world.

"All that is left now is a ruined ivy-clad wall — the gable end of the family home," said Dr Buckley.

"But if proper interpretive signs were installed, or if a plaque was erected, it could become a massive attraction in the area. The site of the ancestral home is located overlooking the Atlantic. To tour around the area within a quarter mile of the site gives wonderful views of Carbery's 100 isles. And with 90m Americans of Irish descent in the US and Canada, the site, if developed with the consent of the landowners, could become a huge attraction for them."

However, the family which owns the land, upon which the ruin stands, is reluctant at this stage to allow the exact location site to be publicly identified. They have spoken to Dr Buckley and are aware of its potential as a site of pilgrimage for Bing's fans. But they said they need time to consider how best to manage the site, amid concerns about insurance and public liability issues.

Dr Buckley said that, in the meantime, there is an opportunity for the people of Schull to honour their famous son with a plaque or a statue in the village centre.

He has spent years researching Bing's Irish roots, drawing mainly on information published by US author Joseph King, who almost 30 years ago traced Bing's Irish ancestors to a specific townland in Schull.

Dr Buckley interviewed local people in Schull and now believes he has finally, and definitively, identified the exact location of Bing's ancestral home.

According to King's research, records show that Bing Crosby's maternal great-grandfather, Dennis Harrigan, was living in Schull parish in the late spring of 1831.

The 51-year-old farmer and carpenter decided to relocate with his wife Catherine, who was in her early 40s, and their 10 children to Canada. The family boarded a timber sailing ship, which would have sailed from West Cork to New Brunswick, where they set about building a new life.

Catherine gave birth on Sept 6, 1832, to her 11th child, Dennis Jr — Bing's maternal grandfather.

One of Dennis Jr's children, Katie, passed on her love of music and singing to her fourth-born and first daughter, Catherine Helen Harrigan, who was born on Feb 7, 1873.

She gave birth to Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby on May 3, 1903. He would grow up to become one of the greatest recording stars of all time. He died on Oct 14, 1977.

Dr Buckley believes the ruin he has identified in the field outside Schull is the house where the family lived before they emigrated.

It is about half a mile off a quiet country road, on sweeping farmland with stunning sea views. Although the remains of the gable end of the house are overgrown with briars and ivy, a shelf-like structure built in to the wall is clearly visible.

Catherine Helen Harrigan (Bing's mother) with James Cagney (left), her husband Harry and her fourth son.

Dr. Buckley believes this is where Mr. Harrigan would have stored the family groceries and the parents' clay smoking pipes. Bing also liked to smoke a pipe. His claim that this is Bing's ancestral home is further supported by the fact that a collection of coastal rocks nearby are named after the family, who would have had the rights to harvest seaweed in the area for use as nutrients for potato growing on their land.

"About two years ago, I heard that Bing came from a particular townland outside Schull," he said. "I heard it again a year ago and made enquiries down there but nobody had heard anything about Bing's connection. "Then one day, I arrived in Schull, and enquired about this particular townland and was told it was a few miles outside the village.

"I called to a house and made enquiries there. They knew nothing but suggested I should call to another house nearby. I called to the lady there and told her about my quest. She produced two books which she allowed me take away, and I spent about two weeks researching them. It was following this that I managed to track down the family which now owns the land.

"At the peak of his fame, Bing was asked what was the secret to his success. He attributed it all to his mother's prayers."

Eoin English

(Editor: And there were some more Schull happenings!)

Bing Crosby's nephew to perform

Howard Crosby continues to work hard perpetuating the image of his Uncle Bing as the *Southern Star* newspaper of West Cork in Ireland told us on June 24.

Late in the spring of 1831, legendary singer Bing Crosby's maternal great-grandfather, Dennis Harrigan, a 51-year-old farmer and carpenter who lived in Schull parish, ushered his family aboard a timber ship bound for New Brunswick, Canada. Of the 65,000 emigrants who set sail in 1831, only 90 or so from Schull could afford passage.

How wonderful it would have been in subsequent years, to have had the great Bing Crosby return to his ancestral home and sing in Schull – but alas it was never to be.

However while tracing his lineage, Crosby's nephew Howard (himself a crooner of note) approached Katrina of Grove *(Editor: a local guest house)* expressing an interested in hosting a concert (funds from which will go to a local charity) in Grove on this Wednesday, June 26th.

He will be singing some favourites from his uncle's repertoire. The concert might even have a surprise guest or two. On Thursday the 27th at 2pm he will be planting an oak tree in honour of his uncle Bing on the lawn of Grove House. All are welcome.

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series of CDs remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $18.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $18.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £11 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has a supply of the book "Alternate Bing Crosby" by Colin Pugh which was published in 1988. Running to 159 pages, it gives details of the many alternate takes Bing made. If you would like a copy, send £3.50 to Michael Crampton. Europe and Ireland members should send £4.50. There are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances and Michael is offering these at the hugely discounted price of only £5.99 including postage. Also Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal figure.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD and video. Festival Films has recently re-released "On the Road with Bing and Bob" with 3 added films and they have a new DVD called "Golf Mania".

Oxford University Press is pleased to announce that:

Late Life Jazz: The Life and Career of Rosemary Clooney by Ken Crossland and Malcolm Macfarlane is now available through all good bookshops and from Amazon, or direct from Oxford University Press at: http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199798575.do Prices: $23.96 (Amazon USA), $26.84 (Amazon USA – Kindle), Can$29.95, £18.99 (UK), £17.09 (UK - Kindle)

Jeremy Rose, by email from Cairanne, France (email: jeremyrose45@hotmail.com)

Jeremy is trying to finalise his collection of BING magazines and he is looking for issues 1-32 to complete his set. Please contact Jeremy if you can fill some gaps for him.

Edward Sturrup, Plymouth, Massachusetts, USA, email: tourtrendsed@hotmail.com

I am trying to downsize my LP collections and magazines, so would be grateful if you could kindly insert in the next BING, under Trading Post:

I have BINGANG magazines for sale from winter 1998 to the final edition in September 2003, total ten issues. $10 plus postage.

BING magazines from issue 119 summer 1998, to winter 2007, no. 147. All these are packed in 3 volume blue covers. Also loose editions from spring 2008, no. 148 to present day, no. 163.

Best offer.

Finally, approx 330 LP's of Bing, all in excellent condition, including High Tor, Bing's Hollywood series, Country Girl 10", How The West Was Won, Box set of Tom Sawyer, and the rare Bing with Glenn Miller. I will be happy to email list.

Wig Wiggins, details on inside front cover.

Wig would like to obtain a copy of Lionel Pairpoint's radio book "And Here's Bing" for a member. Will anyone with a copy for sale please contact Wig direct

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) www.worldsrecords.com/

We were sorry to hear that Worlds Records, which has been open since 1974, is intending to go out of business. They will be open until their inventory is gone so don't delay.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: abcsoc@dodo.com)

The Society has been running since 1977 having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights. The film night for April 15 featured *Road to Singapore* and the Deanna Durbin movie *Something in the Wind* (1947). In June, the film *Dixie* was the headline attraction with support in the form of Bing's appearance on Perry Como's TV show in 1960 and Ed Murrow's *Person to Person* programme. Future film nights are scheduled for August 19, October 21 and December 2. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows, recordings and clips from Bing's films. The site has much superb material on it, particularly in the video and audio archives, and it is well worth devoting some time to it. Over recent months, many of Bing's Decca recordings have been added to the the site and there are now nearly 2000 tracks streaming 24/7 on "Bing Crosby Radio".

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and there is also a discussion facility. Over 87,000 people have "liked" the site which is absolutely fantastic 36 years after Bing's passing. If only some of them would buy or download a Bing CD! If they did, we should have Bing back in the charts in a big way.

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for this site which appeared in January. Lots of useful tweets. It has 935 followers at present.

@Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 1496 followers as we go to press.

YouTube

Bing Crosby Enterprises has its own channel at YouTube with many Bing videos in evidence. Go to:

http://www.youtube.com/user/BingCrosbyEnterprise

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material and Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography", Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" and Malcolm Macfarlane's "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" can be accessed. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Maintained by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so.

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and many stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

Tony Meade's blog

Tony has an interesting and varied site at http://bingsphotos.blogspot.co.uk/

Books 'n' Bing

1. Frank: The Voice By James Kaplan. Published by Anchor, print ISBN-10: 0767924231, ISBN-13: 978-0767924238, 786pp. paperback. £12.99

Keith Parkinson takes a look at this book which is a reprint of the much acclaimed "Frank Sinatra – the Making of a Legend" published by Sphere in 2010.

Some time ago I decided not to buy another book about Frank Sinatra. I had one which satisfied my interest in his recordings - "Sinatra! The Song Is You" by Will Friedwald. Citadel Press satisfactorily covered his films in "The Films of .. " series and Chris Ingham's "Rough Guide" published in 2005 provided a thorough career overview. If I couldn't do without a biography of sorts I would probably settle for the scurrilous but entertaining "His Way" by Kitty Kelley. Which still left me with a dozen or so dispensable books about Sinatra which I had bought on a whim.

Seeing them taking up valuable space on the bookshelf now I have to ask myself "why"? There's a book by his valet. A couple of coffee table books by daughter Nancy. A memoir by younger daughter Tina. That still leaves Earl Wilson's 1976 unauthorised biography, John Lahr's "Sinatra: The Artist and the Man" and "All the Way" by Michael Freedland - the last title being the most dispensable of all. Do I really need Kaplan's book, subtitled "the making of a legend", to add to the yellowing pages of the Sinatra books I will probably never refer to again? I must have thought so at the time of purchase because here begins the review.

One of its main selling points for me was the fact that it covered the years 1915 to 1954. So no major

Mafia issues. Gary Giddins had successfully covered half of Bing's life and proved that a performer's formative and early years could provide a totally satisfying study. And Giddins also obliged with a quote or two for Kaplan's book. The period covered was pre-Rat Pack, which avoided reporting on Sinatra's increasingly insensitive behaviour. Finally, it avoided chronicling the vocal decline which made some later recordings embarrassing to listen to. The sources consulted by Kaplan provided a bibliography approaching a couple of hundred volumes. New to me were the extracts from the files on Sinatra held by the FBI and the correspondence culled from the Columbia files from the years he recorded for that company. There were also quotes from M-G-M memos dating from the time Sinatra was under contract to that studio. Which only leaves the prime reason for my buying the book: the index contained fifty references to Bing Crosby. All the signs for a decent biography were good.

Bing, Bob and Frank ham it up for the cameras at a 1944 golf tournament.

I'll deal first with the Bing content. It was disappointing to find that all mentions of Crosby were either culled from Gary Giddins book, or related to Kaplan's comparisons with Bing in terms of singing style and popularity, or told us how Sinatra held Bing in high esteem. Nothing new emerged, which should have come as no surprise as these top two entertainers of the 20th century only had significant intertwining career links after the period covered by this book.

The correspondence from Columbia proved the most interesting part of the book. Sinatra was not a person to take direction. He knew what he wanted and if he didn't get it you certainly knew about it. In 1945, when he was dissatisfied with his recording contract with Columbia Records, he asked to be released from his commitment. Manie Sacks, his recording manager at Columbia, wrote to him stating: 'We don't do business that way. Nothing has hurt me more than the wire I received from you. Don't friendship and sincerity mean anything to you? If this is the attitude you want to adopt ... you just can't get away with it". The correspondence involving Columbia shows a dark side of Sinatra we suspected existed but not at such an early stage in his recording career.

The book's disappointments range from niggles at minor inaccuracies through to unjustified speculation on the part of the author. Here are a couple of examples of the former. Kaplan refers to Guy Mitchell as "a former child movie actor and radio singer". Wrong on both counts. Mitchell's first ever film appearance occurred when he was in his mid-twenties and he was never a regular on radio. Then we are informed that a duet with Shelley Winters called "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" was never released, although it is included in the Sinatra box set "The Columbia Years" and had an earlier vinyl release on "The Frank Sinatra Duets" album.

My final gripe is the way in which Kaplan reports dialogue exchanges from a "fly on the wall" perspective. This is the point at which any biography transforms itself into a novel and loses credibility. "Frank" is peppered with "you are there" reported conversations. The following example is typical. Sinatra upset Louis B. Mayer - the head of M-G-M - by making an off-colour remark about an incident involving the latter and Ginny Simms. When Mayer got wind of this the following interchange of dialogue is supposed to have taken place:

Mayer: So I hear you have been making jokes about my lady friend.

Sinatra: I wish I could take that back, Louis. I'm so sorry. I wish I'd never said anything so stupid.

Mayer: That's not a very nice thing to do. I want you to leave and I don't ever want you to come back again.

The generally held view regarding Sinatra's departure from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is that he was no longer a box-office draw and his contract was not renewed. Kaplan obviously believes that readers expect a more colourful scenario.

Obviously, this is not a book that I rate highly. Maybe a Sinatra fan could provide a more positive

review. Or better still, a James Kaplan fan.

Keith Parkinson

2. Unsinkable – a Memoir by Debbie Reynolds and Dorian Hannaway. Published by Harper Collins, ISBN-10: 0062213652, ISBN-13: 978-0062213655, 320pp. hardcover. $19.78

Edward Sharp writing in *Perfectly Frank*, the journal of the Sinatra Music Society says:

"Let me make it clear at the outset that this book is not an autobiography or indeed a biography. It consists of a series of memoirs from one of the stars of the Hollywood studio system, who was there for perhaps the greatest of all movie musicals, *Singin' in the Rain*, and who subsequently enjoyed (and endured) a life of considerable difficulty as a result of three marriages that all failed miserably. Despite the lack of a chronological history it is nonetheless a fascinating read, not least because Debbie Reynolds gamely survived not only three broken marriages, but also financial problems that would have floored most people and managed to stay afloat. The title of the book is of course taken from a film in which he starred, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*."

For readers of BING magazine, the interest will primarily be in the film Debbie made with Bing, *Say One for Me* and by coincidence we have a still from this as our back cover in this issue. This is what Debbie has to say about the experience.

"My breakup with Eddie (Fisher) turned out to be a boon to MGM. Suddenly all the other studios wanted me, which meant MGM just had to decide who to lend me out to and how much to charge. Somehow my salary didn't increase much. But I didn't mind as long as I was working.

Before I met Eddie, I was deeply in love with Robert Wagner, and making this movie so soon after my marriage dissolved was a real heartache for me. RJ had moved on and so had I, but being around him reminded me of my fantasy life. Well, RJ wasn't interested, so get over it, Debbie. RJ had to dance in the movie and worked hard to get his positions right. Mostly I kept to myself, though I still have a crush on RJ to this day. There is no one more terrific.

Bing Crosby was a very big star when we made this film, as well as one of the most successful recording artists of all time. His version of "White Christmas" was the biggest-selling single of that era. Bing liked to record at six in the morning when his voice was low. He wouldn't even warm up.

Bing was then married to Kathy Crosby, his second wife, an actress and singer who performed under the name of Kathryn Grant. They gave parties where I met people like the great baseball manager Leo Durocher, whom I wouldn't otherwise have expected to meet.

Many years later, my charity, The Thalians, planned to honor Bing, Bob Hope, and Dorothy Lamour, who had starred together in the seven popular "Road" movies. Everyone told me that I'd have trouble getting Bing to come to accept his award. Bob Hope teased me that I would never get him to agree to it. So I decided to call Bing. In those days you could go direct to anyone, even the biggest stars. You didn't have to go through their agent or manager or hairdresser like you do now—if you can even get them on the line.

Debbie and Bing relax on the set.

I was then appearing on Broadway in Irene, and Bing was on vacation in Scotland, playing golf. Just as I was going on onstage, I got word that he was on the line. Long-distance phone calls weren't as easy to place then as they are now, so of course I took the call. They held the curtain until I finished. When I asked Bing to be our honoree, he agreed, but only if he could accept the award before dinner. He didn't want to wait around all night to receive it. I agreed to his simple request.

...I once overheard Bing on the phone, when we were making Say One for Me, telling the person at the other end to "go ahead and fire him, but don't let him know it came from me." I think he was talking about our director; I'm not sure to this day. Bing was tough, but he could also be generous."

Debbie then goes on to quote the sleeve note Bing wrote for an album of songs she had recorded and finishes with "Thanks, Bing."

Malcolm Macfarlane

3. When Variety Was King: Memoir of a TV Pioneer by Frank Peppiatt. Published by ECW Press, ISBN-10: 1770410295, ISBN-13: 978-1770410299, 300pp. paperback. $13.66

Martin McQuade takes a look at this new book.

When Variety Was King: Memoir of a TV Pioneer chronicles the exploits of veteran television writer/producer Frank Peppiatt who, with partner John Aylesworth, wrote and produced shows for such stars as Judy Garland, Julie Andrews and Andy Williams and Sonny and Cher. They also created *Hee Haw* and *Hullabaloo.*

Peppiatt was once asked to create a special for Jackie Gleason which would include a golf match between *The Great One* and Arnold Palmer. It was envisioned that Bing would announce the game and banter with Gleason. Alas, the show never materialized. Peppiatt, however, did succeed in working with Bing on one memorable occasion.

Just after Christmas, 1959 TV icon Nick Vanoff called. "I need your help. I'm producing and directing a big special with Bing Crosby and Perry Como." Peppiatt eagerly replied, "That is big."

Although Peppiatt and Aylesworth were busy in New York working on a series named *Music '60*, the team could not resist the blandishments of plane tickets, a suite in Beverly Hills and five thousand dollars each. Vanoff met them upon arrival in Los Angeles, and accompanied them in a small prop plane to Bing's country club in Palm Springs. Once there, a clerk summoned them to a large closed circuit TV set. There was Bing on the screen. "Mr. Crosby is just teeing off on 18. He should be here in twenty minutes." The star-struck writers anxiously waited in a spacious dining room, noticing Ray Milland at the next table. Soon, Nick whispered, "Here comes Bing."

Peppiatt remembered Bing's "soft, singsong voice" as he greeted them. "Well, well, well. Nick and the scriveners are here." As they became acquainted over lunch Bing insisted on some ground rules. "My last two specials had themes like glass and wood and I was sort of the second banana. I'm a crooner, not a carpenter or a glass blower, so let's keep things straight ahead and simple."

Aylesworth piped in. "And we must remember that the pairing of Crosby and Como is very special, like Ethel Merman and Mary Martin. People have never heard you sing together." Peppiatt was inspired. "Music lovers all over the world will literally want to stick their microphones into the proceedings." Vanoff ran with the ball. "And we will see to that! Fifty or more microphones will pop in over your and Perry's heads and we go on from there, okeydokey?" Bing was thumbs – up. "Okey – damn - dokey!"

Emboldened by Bing's enthusiasm, Peppiatt brought it to the next level. "It'll be a Crosby – Como crooning contest!" Bing modestly added, "I'll bring my pipes along and proudly participate." As he escorted them back to the Palm Springs airport, Nick exclaimed, "We got the old man geared up. Good job, guys. Now you can start working on some patter to get us into the medley and start putting a medley together. Okeydokey?"

Perry and Bing rehearse for their special.

The duo was invited to a lavish New Year's Eve party hosted by Frank Sinatra, but missed this golden opportunity because they overslept in their hotel room. They consoled themselves by working for three straight days as the new decade dawned. "We finished a good first draft of the medley scene with the fifty microphones. Nick was thrilled with the spot, suggested a couple of changes and it was ready to take to the musical director.[Vic Schoen] Perry Como arrived, and he and Bing hit it off right away. They both loved the medley, and John and I started filling in the rest of the show." Peppiatt was called back to work on *Music '60* so he didn't see the final show. "John said the taping had gone well and he brought thanks from Bing, Perry and Nick."

This special, *The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile,* would be aired on Leap Day, 1960. Perry was so pleased with the "scriveners two" that he asked them, along with Vanoff, to take charge of *Perry Como's Kraft Music Hall* the following fall. One can just imagine their answer. "Okey – damn – dokey."

Martin McQuade

4. Sunset on the Tracks by Jack Boyle. Published by Sunset Memoirs. Also available as a Kindle edition from Amazon. 223 pages.

ICC member Jack Boyle has written (and self-published) a book titled *Sunset On The Tracks.* It's a family memoir, about growing up in Fort Covington in the 1950's, and how that milesquare town in the foothills of New York State's Adirondacks has changed from the vibrant, bustling village he remembered as a child.

It paints a vivid picture of life in the 1950's, just as he experienced it, and continues on through the years with both family and friends playing a vital role in the tale. Of interest to ICC members is the chapter covering his childhood idols, including meetings and contact with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, Milton Berle, Kate Smith, Perry Como, Gordon MacRae, Maria Von Trapp, and Bing Crosby. Jack details his experience seeing Bing perform live at the Uris Theatre in December of 1976, calling it "one of the biggest thrills of my life". He remembers the hush that fell over the crowd as Bing sauntered out onto the stage, each of them collectively feeling the same sense of awe, never dreaming they'd ever see their idol live. He also gives a nice plug to the ICC in the chapter, for which we're most grateful.

I know Jack would appreciate your support in this endeavor. Send him an e-mail at sunsetmemoir@yahoo.com for more information on obtaining a copy.

Greg Van Beek

How Bing Crosby and the Nazis Helped to Create Silicon Valley

Paul Ford, who writes a blog for *The New Yorker,* posted the following on May 13 and it had a wide circulation as it was picked up by a number of other blog sites. It is unfortunate that Mr. Ford had to mention Gary Crosby's book in order to set the scene but other than that, the article is well worth reading.

The nineteen-forties Bing Crosby hit "White Christmas" is a key part of the national emotional regression that occurs every Christmas. Between Christmases, Crosby is most often remembered as a sometimes-brutal father, thanks to a memoir by his son Gary. Less remarked upon is Crosby's role as a popularizer of jazz, first with Paul Whiteman's orchestra, and later as a collaborator with, disciple to, and champion of Louis Armstrong. Hardly remarked upon at all is that Crosby, by accident, is a grandfather to the computer hard drive and an angel investor in one of the firms that created Silicon Valley.

If today's youth make up the first digital generation, Crosby's was the first recorded-music generation. Born in 1903, Crosby grew up in Spokane, Washington, where he spent his latter adolescence haunting record stores and learning the drums, and his twenties on the road as a drummer and singer. He landed in Paul Whiteman's legendary dance band, touring the country. Vaudeville was fading, as was the belting projection of singers like Al Jolson; jazz, talkies, and the radio were ascendant, with Crosby in the wave.

As Crosby left Spokane, writes Gary Giddins in "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams," acoustical reproduction (yelling into a megaphone so that the sound might be recorded directly onto wax) was giving way to electrical reproduction of music.

> "That innovation, which dominated the industry for more than two decades (until the introduction of tape), would help bring Bing's strengths into the spotlight, leading directly to the advancement of his true instrument, the microphone."

Microphones changed everything. Rather than spraying the balcony with emotion (or using a simple megaphone for amplification) the act of performance became more intimate, the singer more vulnerable. In time, the tinnier carbon microphones (as in the telephone) gave way to condenser microphones. Far more vocal subtlety could be transmitted. The dynamics of entertainment allowed for quiet. A different sort of voice found its place on stage and in recordings: the crooner.

From "The Coming of the Crooners," by Ian Whitcomb:

> The press had a field day disseminating the attacks on the "crooning boom" by moral authorities. In January 1932 they quoted Cardinal O'Connell of Boston: "Crooning is a degenerate form of singing.... No true American would practice this base art. I cannot turn the dial without getting these whiners and bleaters defiling the air and crying vapid words to impossible tunes." The New York Singing Teachers Association chimed in, "Crooning corrupts the minds and ideals of the younger generation." Lee DeForest, one of radio's inventors, regretted that his hopes for the medium as a dispenser of "golden argosies of tome" had become "a continual drivel of sickening crooning by 'sax' players interlaced with blatant sales talk."

Rudy Vallée was the first famous crooner, and the foremost, but Crosby held his own. In the nineteen-thirties he recorded "Learn to Croon":

All hopes for the abolition of crooning were dashed by the rise of radio, a crooner's medium. Crosby became a radio megastar. The other greats—like Bob Hope, Fred Allen, and Jack Benny—each came up in vaudeville, and their pacing reveals their early stage training; they *project.* Crosby did stints in the vaudeville-circuit theatres, too, but the bemused, pipe-smoking, golfing fellow who drifted in and out of song was born of the possibilities of the microphone.

Fast-forward into the mid-nineteen-forties. The Second World War had just ended. Americans were picking over the technological remains of German industry. One of the things they discovered was magnetic tape; the Nazis had been using tape recording to broadcast propaganda across time zones. It was a

remarkable invention. Previous sound-recording technologies had used wax cylinders or discs, or delicate wires. But magnetic tape was remarkably fungible: it could be recorded over, cut and spliced together. Plus it sounded better.

Radio shows, however, were supposed to be live. Radio inherited its forms from vaudeville, from variety shows, and it was assumed that the artifice of pre-recording would diminish the audience's connection, at great risk to the sponsors. Crosby—a master of artifice—didn't buy that, according to "Bing Crosby: Crooner of the Century," by Richard Grudens. In 1946 he used his industry power—by then he was on top, one of the world's richest, most famous and intensely beloved celebrities—to step away from live broadcast by choosing a sponsor and network that would let him use large, wax discs. "Philco Radio Time" débuted in 1946 on ABC, at thirty-thousand dollars a week. Bob Hope was his first guest.

TAKE IT FROM THE "OLD GROANER"
Smart amateurs and pros always choose PHILCOS!
"Yes indeed," says Bing, "whether you're a fairway fizzle or a one-putt wonder, your best approach to greater listening enjoyment is a 1948 PHILCO!"
"Wednesday is Bingsday"
LISTEN TO....
PHILCO RADIO TIME
STARRING
BING CROSBY
9:00 P. M. WEDNESDAY OVER A B C

Meanwhile, engineers interested in tape, having learned what they could from what the Nazis left behind, made their way to Crosby and showed him what the new magnetic technology could do. His interest was more than piqued; he handed fifty thousand dollars to the men from the Ampex corporation, which at that time was just a half-dozen people. The machines they delivered went into use in 1947, and a new Crosby show, edited by tape splicing, was broadcast—the first radio show to use the new technology. Suddenly audio—recorded media—was flexible. It could be cut and pasted, rearranged, and edited.

The Ampex sign still stands over Redwood City; it's a Silicon Valley landmark. And Ampex still exists as a smaller company focussed on various kinds of recording. But the company is not what it was; for some time, it was a major manufacturer of equipment in America, a key player in early Valley history: as tape recording caught on, along came computers with stored programs. Magnetic tape was an improvement, in many regards, over punched cards or paper tape; it could more readily store data and programs and play them back. From the roots put down through Ampex came a revolution in data storage.

Tapes were still awkward beasts, however—a tape is essentially a long piece of string. If a piece of data is at the end of the string, you have to spin the tape until you get to the end. As anyone who grew up on old machines that used cassettes to store programs knows, with tape the basics of computing—storage, retrieval—take what, to modern sensitivities, feels like an eternity.

In the nineteen-fifties I.B.M. developed a research project to create the RAMAC, for Random Access Method of Accounting and Control. Roughly the size of a washing machine (and that was just the disk), RAMAC was a set of platters that held about five megabytes of data—about as much data as is in a single longish MP3 today.

This was, of course, the first hard drive, and in "Magnetic Disk Storage: A Personal Memoir," a man named Albert S. Hoagland, who worked on the RAMAC, cites the Crosby connection—how the singer's unusual professional needs led to tape recording. There is a direct link in the Silicon Valley understanding between Bing Crosby's crooning and the rise of the hard drive, which was designed as an improvement over magnetic tape. Or to put it into an equation: Microphones + Crooning + Nazis + Radio + Bing Crosby + $50,000 = Silicon Valley.

RAMAC was victorious, for although you'll still find tape for data storage, the world belongs to the hard drive. But only for now. S.S.D.s—solid state disks, banks of memory—are taking over. The link to the Nazis and magnetic tape is slowly breaking apart.

Crosby's career was built on technology, and he used technology to become a master of artifice: to sing as if he were sitting next to you, even if he were in California and you were in New York. He was an investor with a clear motive—a desire to stop recording live—but the ancillary benefits of tape, which could be rearranged with a razor blade, were useful to him as well. It was a pattern of his life: he also invested in fast-freezing technology, and hence became chairman of the board and chief promoter of Minute Maid. When the company went public, he rang the bell at the Stock Exchange. "White Christmas" and orange juice and bad parenting are the memories he left, along with countless songs.

His artifice was a means to an end. Perhaps this is apocryphal, but once while editing his show on tape he asked for a joke to get a different reaction—for a past laugh to be spliced in. Thus, in addition to setting in motion the technologies that brought about the information revolution, he also indirectly created the laugh track.

Paul Ford

Celluloid Crosby

During their peak years the production lines of the major Hollywood studios were quite content to turn out formulaic fare. They had to average one new film every seven days to fill the screens of the cinema chains they then owned. For every *Holiday Inn* there were a dozen 'B' westerns or further entries in the "Crime Doctor", "Charlie Chan", "Ellery Queen" and other similar ongoing series. This mix of good and indifferent was released to meet the demands of the regular moviegoers who visited their favourite cinema at least once a week. Musicals like *Anchors Aweigh,* released in 1945, rubbed shoulders with *I Love a Bandleader* featuring Phil Harris or *Mexicana* with Tito Guizar, all three distributed within weeks of each other. Now and again a forgotten film would throw up a song which outlived its cinematic showcase, but the discovery of such hidden gems was exceptional. "That Old Feeling" was a song from *Vogues of 1938* (released, of course, in 1937). The 1941 song "Blues in the Night" originated in the film of the same name. *Youth on Parade* (1942) challenges the memory of all but the most dedicated film buff but music lovers will be familiar with the song it featured: "I've Heard That Song Before".

Falling between those two extremes were medium budget musicals. Most of Bing's 1940s Paramounts fell into the average budget category. And just occasionally one or two musical numbers stood out. A slender plotline would be forgotten whilst the songs introduced into the story would live on. A good example of a Crosby picture spotlighting two vocal evergreens is *Here Come the WAVES* (1944). *WAVES* now comes over as an extended recruitment film for that branch of the U. S. armed forces which operated under the full, unwieldy title of Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service.

To disguise the government propaganda element the film's three screenplay writers overlaid a then topical storyline of how Frank Sinatra (renamed Johnny Cabot and played in *WAVES* by Bing Crosby) was wowing the bobbysoxers. The sequence in which Bing sings "That Old Black Magic" was similar to Sinatra's stint at the New York Paramount Theatre. That involved a cleverly contrived publicity stunt which gave the impression that every teenaged girl in the city went wild for Sinatra. Seventy years on *Here Come the WAVES* requires prefacing by a lengthy introduction to make it comprehensible to anyone under the age of fifty.

Yet although films show their age, two of this film's songs, both written by Johnny Mercer and Harold Aden, live on as examples of what we now regard as the Great American Songbook. They are "That Old Black Magic" and "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive".

"That Old Black Magic" was around a couple of years before it was used in *WAVES.* In 1942 it was featured in *Star Spangled Rhythm.* Mercer and Arlen had written the song for Johnny Johnston, not Bing, to sing in that "all star" Paramount production. Glenn Miller recorded the song in 1942. The following year Judy Garland recorded the song and also duetted with Bing on a *Command Performance* broadcast in the summer of 1943. Bing had however given it his first airing on the *Kraft Music Hall* of April 1st 1943 and he sang it a further three times on Kraft but incredibly there was no studio recording made for Decca. How could Bing and Jack Kapp fail to see the song's potential as a feature of the Crosby record catalogue for decades to come? Bing's best performance of the song was for CBS radio in 1956, with Buddy Cole's accompaniment

When Bing came to record it for British Decca in 1976, on one of his last recording sessions, he expressed

dissatisfaction with his performance. By then it had been tackled by almost every singer of merit including Haymes, Tormé, Tony Martin, Buddy Clark, Peggy Lee and Doris Day. Not forgetting Frank Sinatra, who you could say started it all. He first sang it several months before filming on *WAVES* commenced. That was on his radio show "Songs by Sinatra". He made a recording for Columbia in March, 1946 and sang it for the first time on film in *Meet Danny Wilson* (1951). By the time that film came out it had also been seen and heard on screen in *Radio Stars on Parade* (1945) and *When You're Smiling* (1950). Ten years after its debut it was regarded as a standard and some unlikely personalities gave it a whirl on screen. In 1954 Marilyn Monroe sang it in *Bus Stop.* Jerry Lewis tackled it in *The Nutty Professor* in 1963. And Ann-Margret gave her breathy interpretation of it in *The Swinger (1966).*

"Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" has not acquired the same status as "That Old Black Magic", with fewer vocalists of repute recording it. Perry Como made a smooth up-tempo recording of it but it found more favour with the big bands of Artie Shaw, Buddy Rich, Kay Kyser and - in the UK - Billy Cotton. It is the kind of optimistic ditty which Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen came up with when they were responsible for writing Bing's film songs. The only song those regular songsmiths placed in *WAVES* was the romantic ballad "Moonlight Becomes You" which had been used previously in *Road to Morocco* (1942). Mercer wrote the upbeat lyrics for "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" for Bing and Sonny Tufts to deliver in a specific context.

In a BBC interview Mercer said: "When I was working with Benny Goodman back in '39 I had a publicity guy who told me he had been to hear Father Divine, and that was the subject of his sermon, "Accentuate ... and eliminate the negative". Well, that amused me so, and it sounds so Southern and so funny that I wrote it down on a piece of paper. And this was, what, five years later? And Harold Arlen and I were riding home from the studio after a conference about getting a song for the sailors. The sailors wanted to put on a show on a big destroyer and Bing Crosby and Sonny Tufts were going to sing a duet. And could we come up with something? And then Harold was singing me this little tune he had sung before. Now, that's a strange thing about your subconscious ... for five years ... and the minute he sang that time it jumped into my mind as if it dialled a phone number."

Harold Arlen's memory of the composition was, "It must have really pleased John. It was the first time I ever saw him smile." Mercer recorded the song for his partly owned Capitol label in 1944, a couple of months before Decca scheduled a recording session for Bing of songs from the film. It was not a song suited to Sinatra's style, although he took a shot at it in his radio programme "Songs by Sinatra" which was broadcast early in 1946.

Unlike "That Old Black Magic", "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" belongs to Bing. Still in patriotic mode, he sang it in a 1944 short film made for the U.S. Coast Guards. That film, *Swingtime with the Stars,* used the accompaniment of the 11th Naval District Coast Guard Band. The definitive version of the song is the Crosby-Andrews Sisters million seller for Decca which was recorded, together with other songs from *WAVES,* in December, 1944. That provided a reminder to voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that it was eligible for an Oscar nomination as best film song of 1944. "That Old Black Magic" was ineligible because it was not specifically written for *WAVES.* But "Accentuate" lost out to "It Might As Well Be Spring" from *State Fair* just as "That Old Black Magic" - nominated in 1943 for *Star Spangled Rhythm* - lost to "You'll Never Know" from *Hello, Frisco, Hello.*

As for the film itself, I first caught up with it in 1966 when BBC2 screened it .at the end of November. When the film was in production, studio publicity made it known that Leo Lynn, who was Bing's stand in at Paramount, could be seen playing the part of a petty officer. I failed to spot him.

The public liked the film. The critics didn't. It made Variety's list of top money making films for *1944/5* despite reviewers' warnings to stay away. The Los Angeles press were rarely unkind to any movie made in their city but the *Los Angeles Daily News* could find little to recommend. Critic Virginia Wright wrote: "Its satirical view of that popular feminine infirmity - the bobby sox swoon - is funny and fresh. But Bing Crosby's burlesque of the Sinatra movement exhausts

itself after the first few reels. Unfortunately *Here Come the WAVES* dissipates its value as a service film with a thin little story about a pair of twins in love with the crooner."

The film had its New York premiere on 27th December 1944, at the Paramount Theatre, thus encouraging reviewers to take note of the Crosby-Sinatra link. One of the first national magazines to cover the film was *The Nation*. The 6th January 1945 review by James Agee picked up on the Bing and Frank reference. You feel Agee is trying hard not to be too unkind. He wrote:

"Here Come the WAVES is an almost totally negligible musical, which does however, involve Bing Crosby, Betty Hutton (in a double role) and Sonny Tufts. I would enjoy Crosby even if he did not amusingly kid Sinatra, and probably even if he did nothing but walk across shot. I may begin to tire of Betty Hutton's violence some day, but I haven't yet, and though Sonny Tuft's work is almost wholly composed of "natural" mannerisms, I think most of them natural and entertaining."

Has the film improved with age? I'll leave the last word to a reviewer for the *Radio Times*. His verdict - "Empty-headed professionally executed movie recruiting poster."

Keith Parkinson

Tonight's Movie: Top O' the Morning (1949)

Many people write blogs on the Internet and one of these is written by a lady called Laura (surname unknown) who is a proofreader and lives in Orange County, California. On St. Patrick's Day she had something to say about one of Bing's films which we thought we'd share with you.

This year's St. Patrick's Day viewing was *Top O' the Morning* starring Bing Crosby, Ann Blyth, and Barry Fitzgerald.

Although the film has a marvelous cast, it's only mildly entertaining, with the story stumbling along in fits and starts, though it does pick up speed in the last half. I also found the Irish brogues curiously difficult to follow at times; I have no such problems with other films set in Ireland, such as *The Quiet Man* (1952), so that was a bit odd. I think some of the actors struggled to simultaneously maintain the accent and speak distinctly.

Crosby plays a New York insurance investigator sent to Ireland to search for the missing Blarney Stone. Yes, it's been stolen! Barry Fitzgerald plays the ineffectual police sergeant in a nearby town, with Blyth playing his pretty daughter, Conn, and Hume Cronyn is his assistant, Hughie. John McIntire, who later appeared in Blyth's charming comedy *Sally and Saint Anne* (1952), plays a police inspector working on the case.

Very little happens in this rather slow-moving film, which spends a great deal of time on the mysterious prediction of a townswoman (Eileen Crowe) regarding who will marry Conn; eventually, of course, the Blarney Stone mystery is solved and true love prevails.

Ann Blyth and Bing have fun on the set

The best moments, not surprisingly, involve music; I liked the singing at a town dance and a later Crosby-Blyth duet of "Oh, 'Tis Sweet to Think." Two new songs were written for the film by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke, including the title song which is heard during the credits, as well as later in the film.

Crosby is his usual relaxed self, although combined with the lack of much story, the movie was maybe a little too relaxed!

I love Ann Blyth so I was happy to see another of her films….The 25-year age difference between Crosby and Blyth felt a little awkward to me, although a similar 24-year age difference between Blyth and Robert Montgomery was used to good comic effect in the delightful romantic comedy *Once More, My Darling* (1949) the very same year. And as it happens, Crosby later married an actress who was three decades his junior and they were married until he died three decades later, so...whatever!

Small roles are filled by Jimmy Hunt, Laura Elliot (Kasey Rogers), Olin Howlin, and Mary Field. It's curious to note that Barry Fitzgerald's brother, actor Arthur Shields, was billed in the opening credits as "Technical Advisor"; he only worked on the film behind

the scenes, not in front of the camera.

Top O' the Morning was directed by David Miller. The screenplay of this 100-minute film was by Edmund Beloin and Richard L. Breen. The black and white cinematography was by Lionel Lindon.

Top O' the Morning is available for streaming from Netflix Watch Instantly and Amazon Prime.

Laura

http://laurasmiscmusings.blogspot.co.uk/

(Editor: Anyone want to disagree with Laura? Your opinions are welcomed. Laura's review generated some comments on the Crosby Fan World site as follows:

Graham Pascoe. *Top 'O the Morning* barely entertained me. I'd not seen it for years when someone lent me a copy a year ago and I was very disappointed in it. Ann Blyth was an accomplished performer, like Bing, but even they could do little with that material.

Richard Baker: In several of Bing's radio shows shortly after the release of *Top 'O the Morning* there is jocular comment about difficulty in understanding. It is said in one show that Barry Fitzgerald used the same script as in *Welcome Stranger* and *Going My Way*. Bing also says that he owes the Irish an apology for *Top 'O the Morning*. All very self deprecatory and funny but there must have been some reaction to cause this sort of comment.

Keith Parkinson writing in 'Celluloid Crosby' in BING magazine some years ago had some interesting comments and quotes-

"The law of diminishing returns had set in when Bing and Barry Fitzgerald were paired on film for the third time. The thin plot concerned the stealing of the Blarney Stone. The two people interested in its recovery are local police sergeant Fitzgerald and American insurance company investigator Bing. Ann Blyth played Fitzgerald's daughter and provided the obligatory love interest. It was nothing like as successful as the Crosby-Fitzgerald team's triumphs in *Going My Way* (1944) or *Welcome Stranger* (1946). The 'Radio Times Film and Video Guide' described it thus: "Slim musical heavily reliant on the charm and charisma of its diametrically opposed stars. Rather tired and formulaic." One of the exhibitors in the U.S.A. who submitted his own review following the film's rental was the manager of the Majestic Theatre in Clear Lake. He commented: "He (Bing) will be an also-ran if they don't come up with a good one for him soon." The film clearly failed to do the expected business out in the sticks, where audiences were thought to be less discriminating. It played for two midweek days in late February, 1950 at the Vacaville Theatre in Vacaville, California. The manager there called it "another Crosby dud. Bing had better come up with a good one pretty soon or even his old standby customers are going to look somewhere else for entertainment".

Carmela Amari: I'm one of the few who likes *Top 'O the Morning*. I thought it was a cute film with a little bit of Sherlock Holmes mixed in. I think *Say One for Me* is Bing's worst movie. Robert Wagner and Debbie Reynolds are to blame.

Maureen Solomon: At first I was lukewarm to this film, but have grown to love it. Bing's acting is perfection here. He's wonderful and funny, and sexy. The chemistry between Ann Blyth and Bing is unmistakable. I asked Ms. Blyth about her friendship with Bing at Dolores Hope's 100th birthday party. She didn't say anything more than they used to go out dancing. She didn't mention whether this was during the time of filming or later on. The love scenes and duet she does with Bing are very cozy, very warm and believable. The film does take an unexpected turn when Hume Cronyn's secret is revealed. The romance is very well-developed and seems to grow naturally, unlike many films. We also have the pleasure of seeing Bing do a little bit of a jig during the Donovan number. He's like a welcome breath of spring when he appears in the doorway of the house during the party. The scene where Blyth is trying to figure out where the green pocket is in his jacket is very 'well-handled.' An enjoyable film from Bing's last remaining years as a romantic lead.

Richard Baker: I agree, it's one of those that grow on you. Not in the top rank of Bing's output but I think some of the contemporary reviews I quoted earlier were a little harsh. I suspect that one of the problems might have been that by the time it came out Bing had been placed on a pedestal. It was expected that everything he did would somehow be better than the last. Those elevated expectations could not be met all of the time.

(Editor: Another web site which had an interesting Bing item was www.blue-eyes.com and back on May 7, 2010, Michael Johnston reproduced the following article which was originally published in Motion Picture-Hollywood Magazine, Dec, 1943. Maureen Solomon spotted it and passed it on to me.)

Crooner Rivalry: Here's to Sinatra by Bing Crosby

Bing Crosby pikes those rumors of bitter rivalry between himself and Frank Sinatra by giving the overnight singing sensation valuable advice which he himself learned the hard way.

Dear Frank:

The notion that old Bing, your fellow groaner, has temporarily turned uncle and philosopher will, I know, come as a big surprise to you.

But don't get me wrong, chum.

As you know, I've never exactly thought of myself as Bing, the Big Brain from Spokane. I never expect to match wits with Einstein. Mental midgets like Bob Hope are my speed.

However, your old friend and mine, the editor of *Motion Picture-Hollywood*, got the idea that maybe a fellow like me who has been lurking around Hollywood for many years, and eating with fair regularity, might slip a few helpful hints to a young singer like yourself who is riding a popularity wave the like of which show business sees only about once every five or six years.

Maybe the editor is wrong. Maybe I'm sticking my neck out and should continue my lifetime habit of minding my own business. But you being the likable, level-headed gent you are, I'll take a chance this once.

Who knows? It may be fun to give out advice. It sure will be turning the tables because I've been listening to admonitory advice ever since the day in a Spokane

kindergarten when I stole the beautiful red apple some mama's boy, who wore a Buster Brown collar and blue velvet pants, had brought Miss Abernathy, our teacher.

First of all, Frankie, I want to tell you what a laugh it was to me when some people in Hollywood tried to steam up a feud between us. One reason it worked out no dice is because I've known from away back what a right guy you are.

I remembered some of the stories I heard about you years ago when you came out with Tommy Dorsey's band to do a musical for MGM called *Ship Ahoy*.

Unlike some of the young performers who hit the Hollywood gold coast for the first time, you didn't try to make a big flash, throwing big parties and spending all your spare time in movietown's fancy bistros in the hope that some big studio man would spot you.

I heard about you living in a small apartment with your brother *(sic – see note),* who cooked spaghetti for you every night so you could send a few extra bucks home each week to the little woman.

Then there was that party you went to where one of the boys, in his cups, started some talk about a minority racial group to which, incidentally, you don't belong. Frank Sinatra didn't feel like taking much of that talk. This particular racial group was having its ears beaten off in Europe at the time and you thought it would he fine if we had none of that in Uncle Sam's back yard. So you gave out with a snappy left and a kayo right to the chin of this small-scale rabble rouser and ended the distasteful conversation.

For my money, you were Mr. America that afternoon, Frankie! I was proud to be in the same business as an Italian kid who would fight for the underdog in the good old Yankee way.

But now for this advice chore.

I can skip the counsel about the dangers of too many pals, good-time Claras and liquor. You've been a good family man too long for any of that stuff to bother you.

I see by the newspapers that you've been having plenty of managerial headaches lately with various parties slicing up your pay until about all you have left is the envelope the weekly dough comes in.

Back when I was getting my first big breaks—and don't think I don't realize how lucky I've been—I had the same sort of difficulties.

Your main problem is to find one guy, a fellow whom you can trust and is no bird-brain, to run the big business Frank Sinatra and his voice have become overnight. Be sure and choose this gentleman with care, Frankie. If approached by a smooth talker who tells you he can double your money for you in a week, start walking away, and fast! There's only one investment worth a quarter today and it's called War Bonds.

Once you find a sound business manager, let him do your worrying for you. If you have a beef about anything, let him handle the matter. People are always wondering how I find the time for charity golf tournaments, camp shows and other war activities. Well, that's the system, Frankie. I have a paid man to take over all my professional headaches. That not only gives me time out for fun but — and this is more important — it permits me to concentrate completely on my work.

Another thing, Frankie, never forget who your real boss is. It may not have occurred to you as yet, but the man who has really made you famous and will make you rich—God and the internal revenue bureau permitting—is not that fellow in the satin-lined office on the movie lot or the head of the company whose products are plugged on your radio programs.

The guy who actually makes those pretty pay checks possible is named John Q. Public, not forgetting Mrs. Public, his little woman.

Bing found that out a long time ago, Frankie. That's why I never neglect my fan mail. Those people who shove their quarters over the counter in the box offices of theaters on 10,000 Main Streets are the folks to pay most attention to.

The public is your professional sweetheart, your wife. When she gets tired of you, boy, you're through. You gotta give her what she wants and likes, or some other groaner will. And quick!

All of the movie magnates in Hollywood, all of the radio tycoons in the world, can't put you up there in the money again once Mr. and Mrs. Public yell, "Take him away."

I remember the time, when I was fairly new to Hollywood, just as you are now, when a movie producer told my brother, Everett, who runs my affairs, "I'm going to give the world a new Bing Crosby in this picture."

"What's the matter with the old one?" Everett asked him.

"A change will increase his popularity," said the big-shot producer. "I know what the public wants."

"You're a smart man," said old Everett, "but no one guy is that smart. He can only guess. The public knows what the public wants. And Bing's fan mail — which is

the only thing we have to go by — says the people who buy those movie theater tickets still like him as is. And as is he stays until the boys in the gallery yell 'Change your act'."

You'll find all sorts of showmen trying to get you to change your style of delivery. Don't listen to them, Frank. The public is the only barometer and registers its votes at the only polling place for entertainers, the box office.

This is not to say that every song you sing should be sent out in the same way. Variety, I believe, is the biggest professional life preserver. People get tired of too much sunshine and flowers and steaks and all the other good things of life. That's because they're always the same. Why shouldn't people get sick of a couple of groaners like you and me in the same way? Mix 'em up, kid, send those songs out sweet and hot, slow and fast, funny and sad. That's the way I've managed to last this long, that and a lot of luck.

Another thing I've had — and this was lucky, too — is the benefit of good help and advisers. You hear some talk around Hollywood about me carrying my brothers, who run my business and financial affairs. That's a laugh! The truth is that they've helped to carry me. I'd be lost without them.

The next bit of counsel from your pal, the non-Big Brain Bing maybe I don't have to give you. I say that, because you came up the hard way just as I did. You've earned everything you're going to get while you're up there in glittering Headline Heaven.

Yes, I'm going to throw it in, even though, like me, you know what the up-and-down life of show business can be like. Like me, you have slept in flea-bag hotels, sat around for weeks waiting for the phone to ring, and gone hungry more than once.

It's to keep on being yourself. I think it's swell — the classy, down-to-earth way you've taken your amazing flood of high-publicity in your stride, without losing your head.

You'll not have too hard a time keeping that up if you listen more to your critical friends than to the back-slappers. It's the easiest thing in the world for your friends to say, "You were terrific tonight, Frankie boy. Greater than ever."

What is a tough chore for a pal is to say, "Boy, what happened to you tonight? You were awful."

Yep, those are the lads to listen to. Those are the fellows who will still be all out for Sinatra when you and I aren't top singers any more. The others will be too busy throwing posies at the newest sensation in songland to bother with you.

And don't let knocks in the press upset you! You'll catch such blasts every once in a while. I know I have. The funny part of that sort of brick-throwing is that it brings your fans out fighting mad, does you more good than harm.

But maybe you've found that out already, also that the vast majority of the boys and girls who write for the newspapers and magazines would rather give you a boost than an under-the-belt slam.

Every once in a while, though, they miss a good story. For example, like the time, during your last visit to Hollywood, when you were good-natured enough to drop in to clown with me as a surprise guest on the "warm-up" session preceding one of my radio shows. I like to think that some of your fans, who will read this open letter will now hear for the first time of that gracious gesture by an unspoiled young actor named Frank Sinatra.

One final professional tip, Frankie boy. Don't be guided in your selection of songs by those most plugged on the air. I guess it's no secret to you that those plugs can be bought. What shows true popularity are sheet music and record sales.

Another sure-fire barometer you'll find in your fan mail. I take the consensus of fan mail opinion. When a man or woman admires you enough to take the trouble of writing you, "Please sing this, Frank!" he or she is worth pleasing.

Keep riding that skyrocket you're on, Frankie! I'm all for you. Yes, when I heard the whispers about you and me being bitter rivals, I just smiled.

What did those would-be troublemakers think, anyway? That we were running for Governor, or something?

All that silly gossip about you and me hating one another reminded me of the story I heard about the late George M. Cohan, the greatest of all American performers. I'll never be a George M. Cohan, but I like to think that in all actors there is something of his spirit. Here's the story:

Years ago George was out here to make a picture in which he was supported by Jimmy Durante. The movie company's front office kept calling in Jimmy and giving him the fat lines that had originally been written for the star.

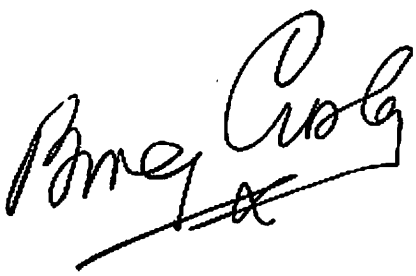
Jimmy, who like all actors held the great song-and-dance man in reverence, became embarrassed after a while. Meeting George on the lot one day, he told him what was going on.

"I can't let them give me a chance to steal your show, Mr. Cohan. You're too big a man for a punk like me to do that to."

Cohan just laughed, "Grab all they throw you, kid. When anyone steals the show from me, it means that I'm not good enough anymore. I've been up there with my name in lights for a long time now. Any added time I get as a headliner is velvet. I like velvet but I can live without it. You're just coming up. Yep, grab everything they throw you, boy. It's okay by George M. Cohan."

Well, what's good enough for George M. Cohan is good enough for Bing Crosby now or any time, Frankie. And I hope you keep riding that skyrocket as long and happily as I've been riding mine.

Yours, with every good wish,



Editor: ***Maureen Solomon*** *added a note:*

I noticed that Bing mentioned Frank had a brother, which he did not have. This could have been ghost written, but don't think Bing would have wanted that. My friend, Vivian Sherwood, who knew them all, said that Bing may have been referring to one of Frank's friends who was like a brother to him. This is what she wrote me about the article:

"The "brother" to whom Bing refers was very probably Nick Savano, a few years younger than Frank and a boyhood pal from Hoboken. Nick was also an only child ... very unusual for Italian-Catholic families ... so they had a special bond. When Frank joined Dorsey, Nick became his "valet" .. took care of a lot of details .... so it was probably Nick or maybe Hank Sanicola ... but I rather think it was Nick. He liked to cook and knew how to make a sauce like Dolly (Frank's mother) made for the spaghetti. Otherwise, the letter is a jewel.

Also, Vivian was married to musician Bobby Sherwood. Here is a story she related to me about Bing's kindness to him.

I remember my husband telling me of how Bing spent hours with him on the terrace of a home at which they were both party guests. Bobby had gone outside to be alone and cry over his recently broken marriage to his first wife. Bing noticed him from inside the house, came outside and joined Bobby and gave him the same sort of talk for hours. Bobby was playing guitar behind Bing then on his radio show. ***Bobby never forgot that night ... told the story often.*** *Big stars like Bing did not usually "have time" to comfort an up-and-coming youngster, even one whose father was his pal. Bing was one in 10 million as his letter to Frank illustrates so very well.*

I asked Vivian for further details and she told me:

Bobby was a child performer in his parents' headlining act in vaudeville, The Sherwoods. In the early 30s, when vaudeville was being overwhelmed by radio, the family retired and bought a ranch in Pasadena. Bobby went on to attend the Pasadena Playhouse. When Bing's very famous guitarist, Eddie Lang, died suddenly, he called my father-in-law to ask for Bobby to replace Eddie. Bobby was 19 but a master of the guitar by that time. In Bing's mind, despite Bobby's youth, he would have no trouble jamming with Joe Venuti and the other guys. And he didn't. He became invaluable to Bing. In the film, Pennies From Heaven, *Bing is dressed in a sort of a jester's outfit and is singing and "playing" a lute. Actually, it is Bobby who is playing the instrument in a pre-record.*

The story I told you about Bing consoling Bobby on the breakup of his first marriage happened right after Bobby joined him at the age of 19.

Bobby could play every instrument in the orchestra. He switched from guitar to trumpet (his horn was sweet, like Bobby Hackett's) in the days before amplification and when nobody could hear the guitar in a dance hall. But they could hear the trumpet.

Maureen Solomon

Editor: Bobby Sherwood (1914-1981) was a guitarist and sometime bandleader who was most active during the 1940s and '50s. He was born in Indianapolis, IN, into a performing family; he made his own debut as a performer while still a child, as part of his parents' vaudeville act. He manifested a strong musical interest as a boy and gravitated to the guitar. At age 19 he was good enough to succeed Eddie Lang as the guitarist in Bing's act. Bobby was also part of the Georgie Stoll orchestra which backed Bing in the mid-thirties on record, radio and the stage. Sherwood's guitar work can be heard on the 1935 recording of "Moonburn". In a review of Bing's appearance at the Paramount Theater in Los Angeles in 1933, Bobby gets a mention.

Crosby is introduced in a production number, the classroom scene out of "College Humor." Wows them with it supported ably by the girl line and Vicki Joyce. Then he gives them 'Last Roundup' for another volley of applause and winds up with some old favs, backed hy Stoll's violin and Bobby Sherwood.
(Variety, October 31, 1933)

From 1933 until 1942 he resided in Hollywood and filled out the rest of his time as a studio musician in MGM's music department, as well as leading Eddie

Cantor's band on the latter's radio show. He married Judy Garland's sister, the former Dorothy Virginia Gumm (aka Jimmie) and they moved in with Judy as did Judy's other sister, Sue, who was married to Jack Cathcart, who later conducted the orchestra on Judy's CBS-TV show. Bobby led the band on some of Garland's Decca sessions.

Early in 1942, Bobby formed his own band, which included in its ranks the likes of Dave Pell, Flip Phillips, and Fritz Becker, in Los Angeles, and which was among the first groups signed by the newly founded Capitol Records label. The group enjoyed some success with their first release, "The Elks' Parade," and also they had a top 20 hit with "Sherwood's Forest".

Sherwood's performing work also extended to acting, but it was music that sustained him for most of the '40s, and as late as 1947 he was still leading a big band. His Capitol contract ended after the '40s, and in 1950 he cut some sides for Mercury that failed to chart. Sherwood's last recordings were credited to "Bobby Sherwood—One Man Band" on the Coral label in 1954, but by that time acting was taking up an ever-increasing part of his work, including a starring role (as Ned Galvin) in Columbia Pictures' screen version of *Pal Joey* (1957). He spent much of the remainder of his career working as a radio DJ.

Just Dial "M" for McQuade

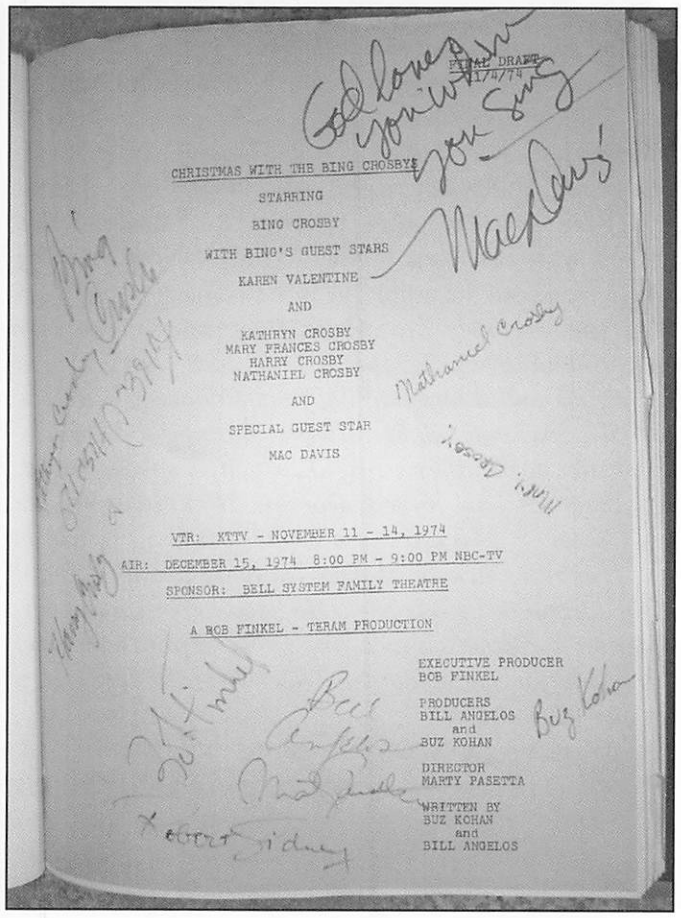
Martin McQuade comes to the rescue.

Phone calls sometimes do come out of the blue. Such was the case when Marla Winter called in early March, having obtained my number from The Paley Center for Media. Marla had contacted the organization while trying to unearth an elusive goal: *Christmas With The Bing Crosbys,* sponsored by Bell Systems and broadcast on NBC on December 15, 1974. Marla wasn't exactly seeking the show itself – she was hoping to find the remarks spoken at the conclusion of the special, which were wedged between Bing's rendition of "White Christmas" and the closing credits, behind which The Crosby Family frolic in the snow. The speaker was her father, Bell employee Les Winter, thanking the home audience for watching and offering an invitation to watch Bell's next upcoming special. Marla had seen the program that yuletide evening. She recalled, "As soon as it aired, as a true testament to 'reach out and touch someone,' the old Bell System slogan, our phone began to ring from friends and family all over the country who saw it."

Marla's wish was to locate this as a surprise for Les' upcoming 75th birthday. One could sense her despair when she asked whether this was in my possession. Immediately my response was yes, but would this be replete with Marla's *Holy Grail*? That was uncertain. Marla must have heard my hands hurriedly rummaging through a few shelves of Bing VHS tapes until they happily came upon what they were looking for. So far, so good. But would the cassette include the footage of Les? The answer was soon to come, as the tape fast-forwarded to the precise moment for which Marla had been searching. This indeed was her lucky day for there was no doubt her quest had ended. There was her father, with Bell helmet on his head, warmly addressing those long-ago viewers – "in living color."

Hi. I'm Les Winter with Mountain Bell here in Denver. I'd like to invite you to watch the next Bell System Family Theater. It's "The Count of Monte Cristo" starring Richard Chamberlain and Tony Curtis, Friday, January 10th here on NBC. Thank you for watching and have a Happy Holiday,

Marla was intrigued to learn the significance of this particular special since it revealed just how well Bing had recuperated from major lung surgery not quite a year earlier and that this had been underscored by a cover story in *People Magazine*. Marla would soon be sent a copy of this rarity, which years ago The Paley Center had kindly restored from my original 3/4 inch broadcast tape. The package arrived just in the nick of time for her father's celebration during which all those gathered would see what for some was a distant memory – and for many something entirely new.



The script for the show autographed by many of the participants

Marla agreed that the story would interest readers of

BING, and sent me this note, as well as images to share. One is a current photo of Les; the other a facsimile of a Winter Family treasure - the frontispiece of the original shooting script, autographed by all members of the Crosby family, as well as special guest Mac Davis, executive producer Bob Finkel, producers Bill Angelos and Buz Kohan, and choreographer Robert Sidney.

Hi Martin

Mom and Dad were really surprised when I popped in the DVD and there's my Dad on the screen from 39 years ago. Dad said he never expected to see that again. My Dad, Lesley Winter, turned 75 on Monday, March 18th. Here's what he remembers from recording that spot, which is not so much a commercial, but a sponsor message for the Bell System.

His supervisor asked anyone if they'd like to make a TV commercial. He raised his hand right up and volunteered, without really knowing anything else. He was sent to an office in Denver and there were about 30 people there auditioning for the ad. I'm not sure even then he knew what it was for. He thinks he was chosen because he worked at Stapleton Airport in Denver and the producers liked the idea of the airplanes in the background for the spot. Shooting the message took a lot of takes to get an airplane coming by on the taxiway at just the right time and it was quite noisy. He was paid a dollar, probably to satisfy some union requirement, and was given an autographed copy of the entire program script.

I want to thank you again for helping me get this spot. I know you went out of your way to copy it and get it to the Post Office to ship overnight. I'm attaching a couple of photos for you, if you'd like to use them in your article
With much appreciation,
Marla Winter

Marla posted the clip on You Tube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5f3K-Fpn4I
She also added these comments:

My Dad, Les Winter, made this commercial for the Bell System at Stapleton Airport in Denver. It took quite a bit of sleuthing to locate this after nearly 40 years. The spot was the closing message to "Christmas With the Bing Crosby's," 1974 special...When the program aired on December 15 our family had to wait through the entire program to catch Dad's closing message, thanking viewers for watching the program and inviting them to see the next Bell System Family Theater sponsored program. This was before VCRs, so we never had a way to capture and save it...At that time, there were only a handful of TV channels and the Bing Crosby Christmas specials were a big deal - everyone in the country watched. Dad was a star, if only for a brief moment.

Martin McQuade

So Set 'Em Up, Joe

And there's more from Martin.

On the day after Easter another tantalizing call came - this time from venerable broadcasting legend, Joe Franklin. His affinity for Bing is well known. As his idol's 110th birthday approached, Joe asked me to go down *Memory Lane* with him once again to discuss a favorite subject; this time around the trip would be part of Joe's interview block heard weekly during the news magazine *On the Weekend* over Bloomberg Radio.

In order to appeal to the corporate profile of the network's audience, we made plans to tape a conversation with special emphasis on "Bing the Entrepreneur." The following was aired nationally throughout the day on April 20, 2013, with an introduction by veteran anchorman Charlie Pellett, spoken over the opening strains of "White Christmas".

We will now hear about the incredible life of Bing Crosby with Martin McQuade of BING Magazine...you can't miss his music at Christmastime...With more, here is Joe Franklin!

Joe Franklin: My guest, Charlie, is Martin McQuade, a leading authority and expert on all things Bing Crosby. Mr. Crosby was the world's biggest movie star for ten or fifteen years and his recording of "White Christmas" is still today history's all-time best selling record. Moreover, Bing was a savvy businessman, savvy as he was an entertainer. We'll examine how he became one of the richest, most innovative entrepreneurs on the planet. Marty, are you with us?

I'm right here, Joe. I'm listening to every word.

What differentiated Bing Crosby's musical stylings from the singers who came before?

I would say his intelligence and his wonderful knowledge on how to use all the technology that was coming up on the scene. I mean, of course, the electric recording, the microphone, and talking pictures. He was able to use all those media to express himself – and to figure out how to use these contraptions.

And his classic single "White Christmas" – Marty, give us any staggering statistic.

I think "White Christmas" has now exceeded perhaps sixty to sixty five million copies. Every year it sells another million or two. You might want to make note, Joe, that this past Christmas Michael Bublé on his television special performed a duet with Bing. Thanks to the new technology that makes this available, Bing and Michael Bublé appeared on television and blended their voices on "White Christmas" and that guarantees further popularity of the song this generation.

How did the unlikely duet of "Bing and David Bowie" come into being?

It was in 1977 – it was the last special Bing would record for television – sadly. David Bowie was very popular at the time. Bing had no concern whatsoever

whether he was outlandish in attire or that he was steeped in rock. He just said to his wife Kathryn, "as long as he's on time and on key, he's all right with me. And their duet, "Little Drummer Boy" / "Peace on Earth" was released as a single five years later and it went on to become a posthumous million seller for Bing.

With one billion, seventy seven million, nine hundred thousand movie tickets sold, according to one statistical tally that I notice here, Bing Crosby is the third most popular movie actor of all time, behind Clark Gable and John Wayne. How durable are his movies – his whole image – in this new millennium? How does he carry on today with young people?

Joe Franklin at the Hofstra conference in 2002.

The "Road to" movies – the seven movies he made with Bob Hope – are absolute gems of comedy film. Holiday Inn, of course, is one of the classic musicals in which he starred with Fred Astaire – and that's a seasonal favorite as well as – let's not forget the immortal White Christmas, made in 1954. When this was released it was the biggest grossing movie of that year. High Society is an enduring classic as are the two movies in which he played Father O'Malley, Going My Way and The Bells of St. Mary's. He won the Academy Award for Going My Way.

Why do those two movies have such a profound impact upon the public?

Because they're sincere and they're very honest, Joe. Bing was such an honest talent. His performance in those movies can be summed up with that one word – honest. When you see Bing on the screen in close–up, especially at the end of The Bells of St. Mary's, his sincerity comes through. His naturalism comes through – and his total relaxation. I think that's the key. James Agee, the great critic, once said, "I would enjoy watching Bing Crosby if he were just to walk across a shot."

Tell us about Bing Crosby as an investor and entrepreneur - tell us about Minute Maid Orange Juice.

Of special interest to your audience, Bing Crosby was a businessman par excellence. He was very shrewd and canny. He was among the first to invest in frozen foods. He invested heavily in Minute Maid. Of course, that became a great success. He had his own company, Bing Crosby Electronics, which pioneered the use of magnetic tape – and later videotape for television. Few people know that this company became a foundation for 3M. [Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing] *He had Del Mar Racetrack which he built in California where he raced his horses. He had his annual Pro-Am golf tournament at the Pebble Beach Golf Course. He also had a company during World War 2 which made, among other things, the wings for the Flying Fortresses. He had a television production company which produced Ben Casey and Hogan's Heroes. He produced movies – Abie's Irish Rose and The Great John L come to mind.*

Wasn't he a major league baseball team owner?

Bing Crosby was a major stockholder-shareowner in The Pittsburg Pirates and attended so many of their games.

You know that bankruptcy courts are littered with celebrities' failed business ventures. What made Bing overwhelmingly successful with no lawsuits?

I think the important thing to remember is that he was classically trained. You can't name too many other stars of that generation who had a full college education, although he dropped out his last year to pursue his music career. He was very special – and he knew how to invest his money. He was the one who tipped Bob Hope on how to invest in oil and land.

I wish he would have advised me! Do we have any figures on Bing's show business earnings and his corporate income – his total wealth at the peak?

Well, Bob Hope once said that when Bing Crosby needed to see over the crowd, all he had to do was stand on his wallet. There is no precise figure on how much he earned, but it must have been substantial. When you think about it, he was, as you mentioned, the number one movie star or so long; number one recording artist; and one of the most enduring radio stars. He managed three colossal show business careers at once – in addition to his business pursuits. And don't forget, Joe, he was a great athlete. Many said that if he were to pursue a golfing career, he would have been a top-notch pro.

He played golf with every president, that's for sure – right?

Yes. And to show that he had a very spiritually guided career, he died as he was playing golf, Joe. He died doing his signature thing, doing what he loved best.

In today's entertainment arena and today's corporate arena, what wisdom can we maybe take away from the remarkable career – and life – of Bing Crosby - one little tidbit, maybe?

Share with others. Bing really demonstrated the capacity to share. He shared the spotlight, he shared the top billing, and he shared his recordings with so many people. He shared with others and he never forgot the fans that made him a star. He once advised Frank Sinatra, "the only person you really have to account to, Frank, are the people in your audience."

****

Obviously, we only skimmed the surface of Bing's multi-faceted business interests. His industrial endeavors are examined at length in an article entitled "Bing Crosby and Magnetic Recording" by John Vardalas PHD, outreach historian for IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers). Here is a link to this informative essay, which appeared in the November, 2012 issue of the organization's monthly web publication, *Today's Engineer*, in honor of Bing's forthcoming 110th birthday.

http://www.todaysengineer.org/2012/Nov/history.asp

Martin McQuade

Keeping the Memory Alive

Carolyn Schneider sends an update on her recent activities.

So far this year I have had the opportunity to speak before several clubs and groups on our favorite subject, Bing. Always with a very positive response, my audience grows smaller and older, yet what we lack in quantity, we still maintain in quality. I continue to promote my book, which hopefully serves as a reminder to the public that an entertainer as great as Uncle Bing should not be forgotten.

My speaking engagements include: The Mesquite Women's Club, The Clark County Book Fair, The First Unitarian Women's group, The Performing Arts Society of Nevada, The Boulder City Museum Lecture Series, (guest speaker), and The Town Club of Las Vegas.

I'm looking forward to more appearances during the balance of this year, especially at Christmas.

Bing's Jacket

Vintage clothing has always been of interest to collectors and museums. Authenticity is of major importance; therefore the term "provenance" comes into play. Proof of ownership through historical records or documents, plus photos and personal interviews are often used to verify the personal belongings of an individual.

In the case of the Bing Crosby denim tuxedo jacket made in 1951 the subject is a bit complicated. Due to the fact that Levi Straus & Co. liked the tuxedo jacket they made for Bing so much that the company produced a number of replicas as promotional and display items. The jackets are very similar to Bing's and some owners of replicas believe they have the original tuxedo jacket that belonged to Bing. Most of the denim tuxedos have been given to friends, family or Crosby fans over the past 50 or so years. While most of the replicas have been identified, Bing's original still remains at large.

Carolyn holds her replica of the jacket

By working with the Levi Co. over the past several years, and now considered to be an authority on the subject, I have been able to examine 13 tuxedo jackets and determined them to be replicas, including the one on display in the museum in Elko, Nevada.

The purpose of my diligent research is to inform the public of the existence of these many replicas, thereby avoiding any confusion or misrepresentation on the part of vintage clothing collectors and dealers.

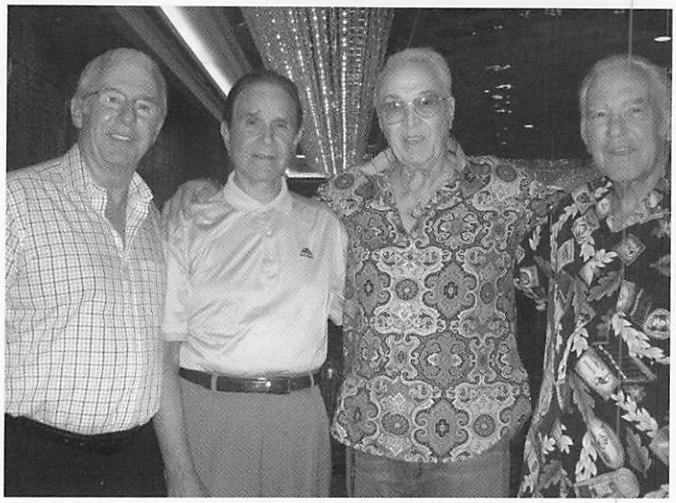
Members of ICC can be helpful to this project by

sending me any information or photos they may have regarding the subject of the Levi denim tuxedo. Keeping an accurate record and provenance of the jackets helps to maintain the integrity of the vintage Crosby denim tuxedo.

Carolyn Schneider
9811 W Charleston Blvd
#2-185
Las Vegas, Nevada 89117
Phone: (702) 240-8570
Email: artist71635@msn.com

(Editor: I was in Las Vegas in June for my youngest daughter's wedding and naturally I contacted Carolyn. She kindly invited my wife and me to lunch with her and her husband Dirk and afterwards we continued to Carolyn's lovely home.

Carolyn produced one of the famous jackets which I duly tried on and she showed me many other Crosby treasures including the family Bible. I filmed some of these and will show the resulting video at the Leeds meeting in October.



(l to r) Your Editor, Rich Little, Steve Rossi and Jimmie Rodgers.

Incidentally, Carolyn tells me that she still has a few copies left of her book "Bing – On the Road to Elko" so don't delay if you haven't yet picked this up. US members only unfortunately because of rising postal costs etc.

Another Crosby fan I met was our honorary member Rich Little. For the last year, Rich's show "Jimmy Stewart & Friends" has been running in the Shimmer Showroom of the Las Vegas Hotel and we arranged to see it whilst we were there. It's a delightfully nostalgic show in which Rich plays Jimmy Stewart who is looking back on his life. This gives Rich the opportunity to portray about 40 personalities who met Jimmy during his life and we were treated to spot-on impersonations of people like Jack Benny, George Burns, Johnny Carson (including Carnac the Magnificent), John Wayne and Henry Fonda amongst many others.

Talking to Rich after the show, we met Steve Rossi (formerly of Allen & Rossi) and singer Jimmie Rodgers who had big hits with "Honeycomb", "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine" and "English Country Garden." I recalled buying "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine" back in 1958 and Jimmie responded with "Oh, you were the one!" Jimmie first met Bing in Seattle and Bing told him "You have a good voice." Subsequently Jimmie played in Bing's Pro-Am at Pebble Beach.)

Bing at the Dorchester

Your Editor had the opportunity to act as an Enrichment Speaker on a 14-day cruise on the Fred Olsen ship "Boudicca" in April. I gave seven separate 45 minute PowerPoint presentations on subjects such as "Sounds of the 50s", "Sounds of the 60s", "The Great Musicals of Stage and Screen", Frank Sinatra, Vera Lynn, Elvis Presley and of course Bing. Audiences of about 200 people were very responsive and they sang along to the songs and shouted out answers to the questions I threw out to them. After the Bing talk, one of the people who came up to see me was a lady who said that she used to work on the administrative staff at the Dorchester Hotel in London. Bing stayed there several times and the lady spoke very well of him. Many of the stars who stayed at the Hotel behaved badly but "Mr. Crosby was always an absolute gentleman." On one occasion, a young member of the staff ran up to Bing and asked for an autograph for his mother. Bing duly gave this but as it was against the hotel rules to bother guests in this way, the boy was later dismissed. When Bing heard about this, he approached the management and asked for the boy to be reinstated saying that without his fans he would not have had a career. The hotel quickly re-employed the boy. A lovely story.

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

John Newton, by email from Wilmington, Delaware, USA

While playing an old Bing CD, after having it for at least 10 years, I happened to notice an error that I felt required correction. Perhaps this has been long since caught and corrected by another Bing fanatic, but I thought I'd write nevertheless. I'm referring to the wonderful Jasmine series, "Going Hollywood", specifically Volume 3 that contains the error.

Among the titles for the film *Rhythm on the River*, the last song is "Beware", described as having been cut or deleted from the film. This is definitely not so. I must imagine that the source for this song must have been a taped or otherwise second-hand source copy, as the original disc would clearly identify that the song did not have any connection to any of Bing's Paramount films.

The song "Beware", actually titled "Beware (I'm Beginning to Care)", was written for Bing's Universal film *East Side of Heaven*. The recording itself (mx. B-7318) was recorded by Bing as a "demo" for one of the songs being considered for *East Side of Heaven*. In addition to the title, the original type-written label states "Sung by Bing Crosby for Universal Pictures". . The next two consecutive master numbers were also "demo" recordings that Bing made for *East Side of Heaven*. B-7319 is a "demo" of the title song, and B-7320 is a "demo" of "Sing a Song of Sunbeams". The labels of these records also state "Sung by Bing Crosby for Universal Pictures".

In the latter two demo recordings, it is interesting that Bing made critical comments at the end of the recordings. After drifting off-key and having some uncharacteristic difficulty with the title song, he declared, in horse betting terms, that the song was a loser. His comments gave much better odds for "Sing a Song of Sunbeams". Bing was ultimately wrong about the title song, of course. I can send you photo-copies of all the labels, if this might prove useful to you.

Again, recognizing that this error may well have been corrected long ago, I just felt a correction was in order in case this somehow slipped by the Crosby collecting fraternity.

(Editor: Thank you John for pointing this out. It was certainly new to me.

Michael Crampton received the following letter in March.)

Marc Matelart, Waterloo, Belgium

Some time ago I informed you that all Bing's feature films, as well as thousands of other classic films (in fact all of them) are available on DVD from the two American dealers whom I selected in the magazines – *Classic Images* and *Films of the Golden Age*, namely Peter H. Vollmann and George Johnson.

It is incomprehensible that this crucial information is not mentioned in the magazine where they say "Nothing new on DVD" in *Keeping Track*.

It is the only way in the world to obtain hundreds of classic films, especially at a time when TV programs have reached total mediocrity, including those of the BBC. Apart from TCM (France here) there is almost nothing valuable anymore.

On March 20, 2012 I bought a CD recorder that transfers 33, 45 and 78 rpm records direct to CD. It is a slightly different model from the one illustrated in the Radio Times. Shortly after, I wrote to you about this machine which was miraculously on display in a shop here in Waterloo. It is manufactured by TEAC (Japanese) and no one else here seems to know about this recorder, even in the large specialist shops in Brussels. It is also incomprehensible that this basic information is not mentioned in the magazine.

There is not enough practical information for the collector in the magazine.

For another example. Is 58 Dean Street Records still in existence? If not are there other shops in London that still sell LP records? In Brussels, we have "The Collector" that still has a large choice of LP records of popular music of the golden age.

(Editor: Regarding 58 Dean Street, the business became known as RARE DISCS and was based at 18 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1. B3QA but sadly it appears to have gone out of business in 2006. Can any other members supply details of any other shops that sell LPs?

I note that Marc feels that not enough is included in the magazine for collectors but as we have stated on a number of occasions and as set out on our web page:

> The magazine is yours. Other than in the Editorial column, you will not find a commentary by the editor running through the journal. Nor indeed will you find the editor writing the journal for you. You must subscribe and support by giving us your views, your articles and anything else you can offer.

The contents of the magazine therefore reflect the material submitted by our members. Incidentally, Michael Crampton is not directly involved in the production of the magazine and if members want something included they ought to write to me.

Marc has now supplied further details for Peter H. Vollmann and George Johnson and they are:

Peter H. Vollman,
Movie Memories
370 38th Sq SW
Vero Beach FL 32968-3933, USA
(Phone: [772]562-3251,
email: vollmann1@yahoo.com)

George Johnson,
The Movie Man
10045 Gaviota Ave.,
North Hills, CA 91343-1625, USA
(Phone: [818] 891-9236)

I have no idea whether these men are legitimately selling these DVDs and members must make up their own mind. Marc tells me that the quality is excellent and that the DVDs are Region Free.

The TEAC equipment mentioned by Marc is the LP-R500. It's available from Amazon and full details can also be found at:
http://www.teac.eu/hifi-audio/general-audio/copy-systems/lp-r500/
Subsequently, Marc wrote again enclosing copies of the magazines - 'Classic Images' (issued monthly) and 'Films of the Golden Age' (issued quarterly) - and going on to say as follows.)

Marc Matelart, Waterloo, Belgium

...For film and entertainment related books I recommend Mrs. Gerlinde Pflaumer-Yeater who advertises in every issue of these magazines as follows:

Books from the Silver Screen,
6770 Runkles Rd., Mount Airy, MD 21771, USA

For collecting star photos I recommend:

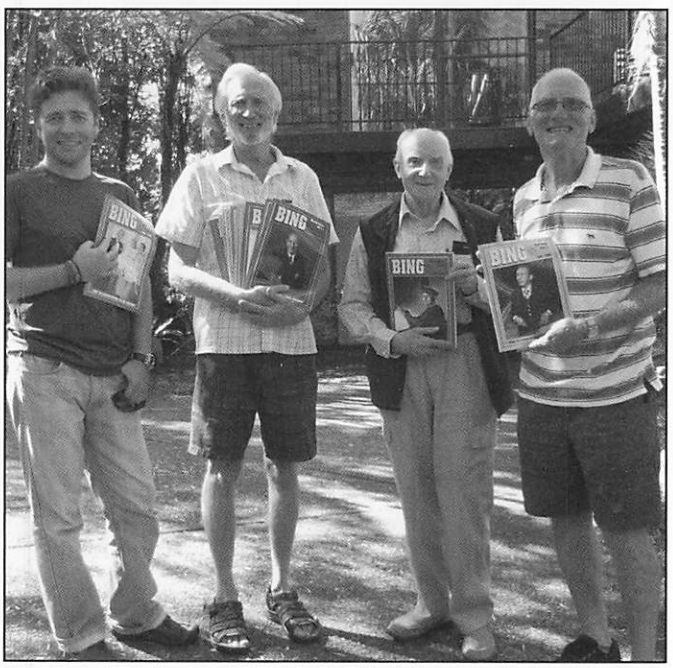
Stephen Sally,
102 Railroad Ave, Hackensack, NJ 07601, USA
Website: http://www.enterit.com/stephen4972/
Email: sallypix@aol.com

(Editor: Marc used to deal with The Cinema Bookshop in Great Russell St., in London and he wonders whether club members know if they have moved because his letters have been returned.)

David Currington, by email from Turramurra, Australia.

As we look back over time, attached is a fascinating photo which reflects the generations of Bing collecting. Amazingly, there is seventeen years between each generation shown here in the photo of me, Thane Cooper, Graham Pascoe and Percy Waters.

Percy is not a member of the ICC, but he has a unique connection to Bing. Percy was one of those members of the RAF in the audience at the Queensberry All-Services Club on 27 August 1944 for Bing's recording of *Variety Bandbox*, and in the streets thereafter when Bing came out to sing on a balcony in an attempt to disperse what Percy remembers as being thousands of milling people. I delighted in our little gathering to play for Percy Bing and Anne Sheldon's "Easter Parade" which he heard live on that day but not in the ensuing 69 years.



(l to r: Thane Cooper, David Currington, Percy Waters and Graham Pascoe)

As our contact with people who witnessed Bing during what were his most popular years diminishes, it was especially rewarding to relive this moment in time with a participant.

Thank you for news of the upcoming Kraft disc. Sepia continues to maintain our active interest in Bing with its ongoing unique CD issues. With *The Road to Hong Kong / Say One For Me* disc just received (it's great to have the previously unissued "The Secret of

Christmas" included), it is indeed fantastic to look forward to their next offering due for release as soon as next month. Thanks to you, Malcolm, and all those involved in the Sepia issues.

Lachlan McLean, by email from Kogarah, New South Wales, Australia

Bing got a mention in the papers in relation to an Australian horse scandal:

Straight from the horse's mouth

Racecourse tips, whispers and rumours of horses that can and can't win are as old as the Byerley Turk himself ("The inside running on a racing bust-up", May 4-5).

A popular Bing Crosby tune, now over 50 years old, from the film *Riding High*, summed it all up rather nicely.

"Oh, the owner told Clarence the clocker, The clocker told jockey McGee.
The jockey, of course, passed it on to the horse, And the horse told me."

Well we know Singo, Nash Rawiller, the Waterhouses, the vets - plus "Johnsy", "Robbo" and Eddie - have all been asked to testify, but if you can believe old Bing, the one that should be first to take the stand for clear, truthful evidence has not even been asked to appear: More Joyous, herself *(Editor: this was the name of the horse involved)*. Surely it's not too late?

Peter Bower Naremburn

Mark Spry by email from London, UK

Something interesting, on a Radio 4 programme this morning (Apr 6 – 85th birthday of Lehrer) about Tom Lehrer the satirist there was mention of Bing Crosby singing his song 'Pollution'. Crosby wanted to change a word, 'crud', since it was considered unsuitable for the TV audience, and Lehrer said, "If Bing Crosby wants to sing one of my songs, he can change anything."

(Editor: Keith Richmond was another who noticed this and told me about it.)

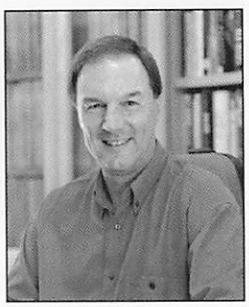
Roger Schore, by email to Greg Van Beek from New York, USA

…Happy to hear about the linking up of BCE with Universal. It certainly seems to make sense to have Bing's vast catalogue housed under one roof (I got a kick years ago, back in the LP era, when "Hey Jude/Hey Bing" was licensed and re-released on the MCA label.) Looking forward to the new catalogue releases later this year.

Wig just sent me the new Sepia release. For me, the highlight is "I Thought About You.". For all the times I've heard the song (and it's been a lot since it seems to be in the repertoire of every jazz singer), I never heard or felt the the inherent loneliness in the lyric until Bing's version. Really wonderful.

CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland takes a look at all things Bing



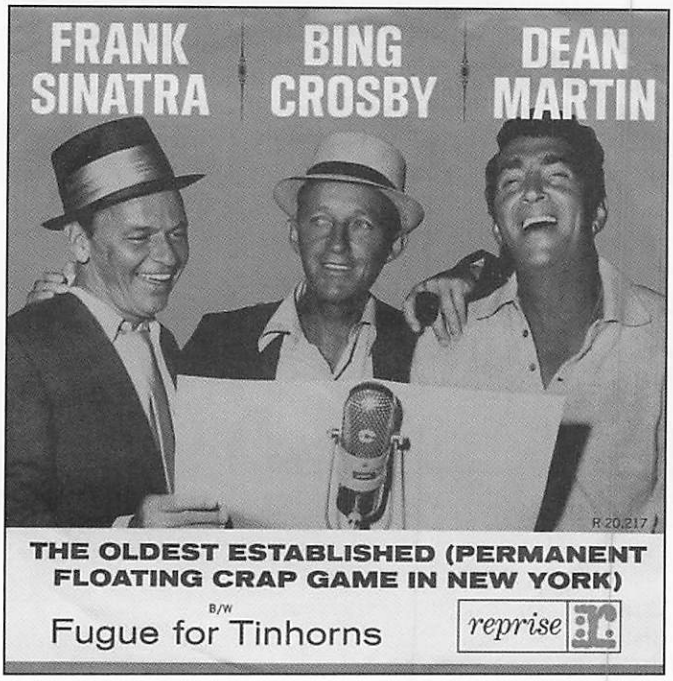
A new issue and a new column! My thanks to Richard Baker for taking the reins on *Keeping Track* and whilst I felt that it was time for a change there, I was keen to take on something new. So when Malcolm offered me the chance to write a freestanding column, I jumped at it. "You'll need a title," he said and that in itself offered the first challenge. A Crosby song title maybe, although several days of thought and rumination failed to bring any inspiration. Instead I decided to look back to previous Crosby journals and take the word coined by the English collector, Ralph Harding, way back in the 50s (he even called his house Crosbyana). No dictionary definition available but if challenged, "all things Bing" would be my offering. So, welcome to the first Crosbyana column which I hope will take us into some interesting waters.

This first piece actually begins where I left off last time in *Keeping Track*. A number of members wrote to me to say they enjoyed my story of the failed pursuit of a cache of Bing 78s - 810 in fact - on eBay and the story has a postscript. Some weeks later the same seller listed another batch of records and this time they were 45s. There were 82 Crosby items offered along with other batches of singers that resonated with me, notably 21 Michael Holliday 45s (a significant number, being almost half his recorded output). This time, I was successful and discovered on collecting the records that they came from the collection of our late member, Maurice Beardmore, who I met a couple of times and who passed away last year. The seller was his younger brother.

Returning with my treasure, I was struck by the fact that there was still a feeling of second prize about it. I had gone into the deal knowing that I had a pretty good collection of Crosby 45s, so I was not expecting any real gems, but I sensed that wasn't the only reason that my spirits failed to rise as they had done with the 78s. It was only when I came to sift through the records that the penny dropped. I thought back a few years to when EMI finally got around to remastering all the Beatles albums and issued them on a new set of CDs. At the time, I was puzzled by the fact that the label chose to issue both mono and stereo collections. Why, I wondered, would anyone buy a set of mono discs when a far superior audio experience was available? Even more puzzling was why the mono discs were priced at a premium above the stereo versions. The answer, it seemed, was that for

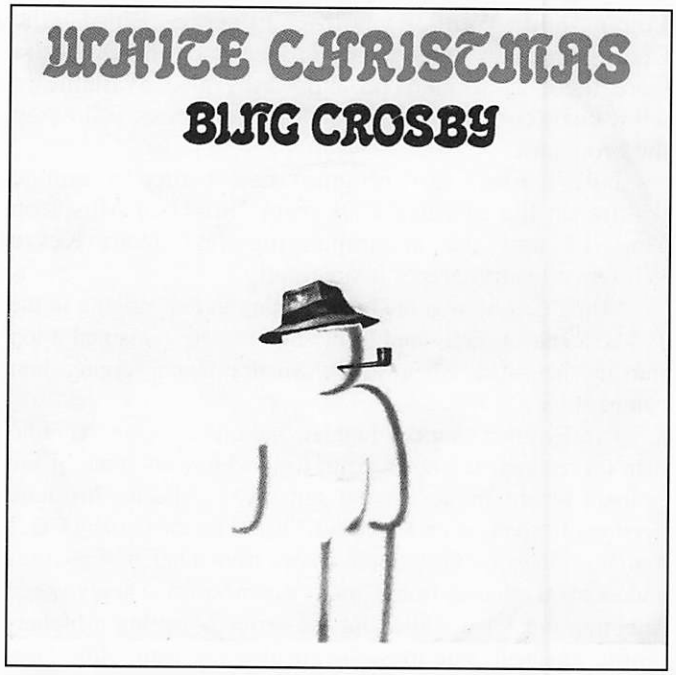
many Beatles collectors, their first purchases had either been original mono 45s or, being the days still when stereo record players were not commonplace, mono versions of the original LPs. Replicating that first listening experience was what took them to the new, mono, CDs.

Does the same thing apply to our enthusiasm for Bing, I wondered? Perhaps so. Maybe there are certain forms of media that "fit" our expectations of Bing, and others that don't. Take radio and television as examples. If you want to experience the media that connected Bing to his public, most of us would reach for a KMH or Philco radio show rather than a Bing Crosby TV Show for Oldsmobile. With Perry Como, it would be different and we would look to TV first. For Sinatra, I suspect, we would eschew both radio and TV in favour of some footage of a live concert performance. Perhaps the same is true with records. Do we think of Bing as a 78 rpm singer? Even someone like me, a 60s arrival on the Crosby scene, thinks of Bing more in terms of Ace of Hearts LPs than Capitol or Reprise 45s.



Perhaps it's because the Crosby brotherhood has never seen Bing as a 45 rpm singer that there has been no Crosby 45s listing published by the ICC or its predecessors. Way back in the early 80s, Wayne Martin and others put together some listings in BINGANG of US issues of EPs and boxed sets of 45s. Back further still, my new namesake, Ralph Harding, listed some UK issues in his short-lived Crosby Collector publication, but as far as I can see, no listing exists of Bing on 45, either in the US or the UK. What that meant was that when I came to look through Maurice's collection, there were surprises waiting. For a few minutes, I was transported back in time to a pre-internet world when a visit to an overseas record shop revealed things you had never seen before and indeed, never knew existed. A collecting hobby knows no finer moment and so it was with the 45s. Take for example, the new fact (to me, at least) that Bing's final UK Brunswick single release was not the pairing of "Rain/Church Bells" (although it was the final 78 release) but instead was a May 1965 re-issue of "Many Happy Returns of the Day / I Apologize", complete with a new catalogue number of 05934. That had been preceded three months earlier by a similar re-issue of "Where the Blue of the Night/Goodnight Sweetheart" (05928).

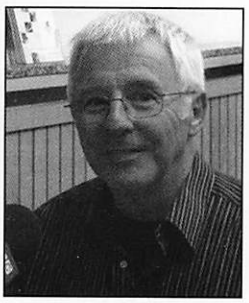
Just what prompted UK Decca to dust off these 34 year-old recordings for a single release at the time when the Beatles and the other groups were in full flow is a mystery - although perhaps our member Geoff Milne, who was at Decca at the time, might know the answer. This revelation of unknown 45s prompted me to do some internet searching for a listing of all UK Brunswick 45s. Nothing emerged other than a link to someone in Canada whose father, Paul Pelletier, had published some listings under the title of Record Information Services back in the late 70s. A few hard copies were still around but the pricing and postage from Canada to the UK was prohibitive. Somewhere however, a distant bell sounded and an hour's digging around in the loft produced a copy of the said Mr. Pelletier's Brunswick listing. That tells us that Brunswick in the UK began issuing 45s, alongside 78 rpm versions, in November 1952, the first issue being Bing's "Beautiful Dreamer / By the Light of the Silvery Moon". 45 rpm releases remained selective until October 1954, by which time it was apparent that the writing was on the wall for the venerable 78 rpm record. All releases from then on were issued in both formats until December 1959. Bing's final UK Brunswick 78 had appeared in May of that year. The label continued in existence until October 1967 before being usurped by the MCA imprimatur as a result of both British and American Decca labels being taken over. There were three 45 rpm only releases by Bing, the two mentioned above and an earlier "Happy Birthday-Auld Lang Syne/Home Sweet Home" issued as 05840 in October 1960.



But back to Maurice's discs. There were other surprises too. I knew that "White Christmas" had appeared in no end of different guises but I had forgotten some of the imaginative artwork that came when 45s started getting picture sleeves in the 70s and 80s. This one is my particular favourite, along with the Reprise offering from 1963, shown earlier. Maurice's disc was the UK version but was the picture sleeve British too? Answers on a postcard if you know. In the meantime, I am enjoying the often neglected world of Bing on 45. The 1957 Capitol release "Man on Fire", Bing and Satch on an MGM issue of "Dardanella" and best of all, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" on Daybreak, all sound great as the auto-changer on my 1960s Hacker record player drops them one by one onto the turntable. Thanks Maurice.

Ken Crossland
ken54@blueyonder.co.uk

BING ON THE BOX



Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

TCM marked Bing's birthday with a very welcome mini Crosby festival and have shown other Bing films too.

Going My Way	TBN
High Society	TCM
Man on Fire (*also see opposite)	TCM
Pennies from Heaven	TCM
Road to Bali	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
That's Entertainment	TCM
The Road to Hong Kong	TCM

Inger Stevens (left) and Mary Fickett (right) enjoy a cup of tea with Bing on the set of *Man on Fire*.

*David Lobosco has spotted that those with Comcast as their cable provider have *Man on Fire* on their On Demand menu. You click on free movies and then TCM and you can watch the movie as many times as you want!

It was good to see that Michael Feinstein's American Songbook has had another 3-part series on PBS. This was transmitted in the UK earlier this year and was reviewed in our last issue.

An interesting Crosby "sighting" was in episode 3 of the latest series of *Mad Men*. The episode ended with Don (played by Jon Hamm) sitting outside his front door as Bing's 'Just a Gigolo' led into the end credits. A rather appropriate song choice considering what we have learnt of Don's teenage years.

USA Radio

There were various tributes to Bing to mark the 110th anniversary of his birth and one of these was **Greg Van Beek's** broadcast on his weekly radio series *Nostalgia Radio Time* on 1420 AM WJUB. His May 4 program featured a complete one hour broadcast from the BBC that aired on October 16, 1976 titled "Solid Gold Bing" hosted by Bob Hope with interviews from Andy Williams, Fred Astaire, Peggy Lee, Sammy Davis, Jr., Perry Como, Jack Benny, George Burns, and many others! It was a wonderful celebration of Bing's 50 years as a recording artist. Greg's show is on for an hour each Saturday starting at 10 pm (CST) / 11 pm (ET) and always includes a "Bing Sings" segment. You can tune in online at the www.1420thebreeze.com website or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to www.1420thebreeze.com and clicking on the 'audio archives' link. Another highlight from Greg was on his March 30 show when he included the entire *Philco Radio Time* from April 7, 1948, with Bing, Fred Astaire,

and Peggy Lee.

On June 21, Greg was the guest on "Tube Talk" which is a radio show about antique radio. Hosted by Paul Buresh and broadcast live on WRCA 1330 AM Boston every Friday night at 11:00 p.m. "Tube Talk" is also streamed live on the Internet at www.1330wrca.com/streamer/. Greg was quizzed about his involvement in *Nostalgia Radio Time* and he talked about Bing, *Philco Radio Time* and of course his interest in antique radios. The ICC was given a great plug as was Bing Crosby Enterprises.

Another birthday tribute was *Bing Crosby at the Movies* which was broadcast on May 1st on KPBX Spokane Public Radio. The program was put together by **Janean Jorgensen** as part of her ongoing series *Broadway Matinee - Songs from the Stage & Screen.* This is described as a weekly hour of show tunes, including vaudeville, the "Golden Age," songs sung on screen, and today's newest stage and cabaret music. Janean makes the show available to local radio stations and the Crosby tribute was also bought by KKRN as well as Spokane Public Radio. Mainly using Bing's commercial recordings to cover his film career, the hour long show contained the following:

True Love – So the Blackbirds and the Bluebirds Got Together – Just One More Chance (1931) – Please (1932) – At Your Command – Where the Blue of the Night (1932) – We'll Make Hay While the Sun Shines – Blue Skies (with Danny Kaye) – Moonstruck – You're the Top (1956) – Put It There, Pal – Moonlight Becomes You – Love in Bloom – Swinging on a Star (from soundtrack) – Lazy (from soundtrack) – Busy Doing Nothing – Evelina – Moonburn – Now You Has Jazz

Not sure how "Evelina" got in there although it did come from the film *Bloomer Girl* but Bing was not in it of course. Still never mind, it was a very pleasant program.

ICC member **Lorne Harasen** of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, broadcast a two hour Crosby-Clooney show on May 10 on 91.3 CJTR Regina Community Radio. Lorne put this show together himself and he commented:

> "...The main thing is that it is a couple of hours of Bing, Rosemary and the two of them performing together. The point is that you can't find a radio station in this area where you would find this material and that is the case for countless small and middle markets. That is disappointing and amazing. Perhaps larger centres such as New York or Toronto where you can "specialize" but not in most cases where you are restricted to country or various types of rock. I have wanted to do this for a long time and I'm pleased that CJTR has come through. CJTR tells me they are going to run the program once or twice more with summer approaching. It was not a masterpiece but we heard a lot of Bing in the two hours. One listener said, "What a pleasant way to spend two hours!" That is good enough for me. The purpose was to give them Crosby and Clooney and not highlight an ancient would-be disc jockey!

KEZW and the Glenn Miller Archive at the University of Colorado continue to present the *Star Spangled Radio Hour* every Saturday night at 6pm. On May 11, they broadcast the *Kraft Music Hall* show from February 15, 1945 with Bing, Eddie Heywood, Ella Logan and Wendell Niles. Eugenie Baird, the Charioteers and John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra were there as usual. The show was also available at www.kezw.com as a podcast for two weeks following the broadcast.

NPR's *Fresh Air* program had a nice 8 minute feature on the reissued CDs from Universal Music on May 13 and the accompanying text from Kevin Whitehead summarizes it succinctly.

"Bing Crosby was the biggest thing in pop singing in the 1930s, a star on radio and in the movies. He remained a top star in the '40s, when Frank Sinatra began giving him competition.

Crosby often sounded funnier, and more at ease, on radio than on records. It's not hard to hear why, with some of the settings record producers put him in — like a '70s funk version of "Georgia on My Mind," heard on the Crosby CD *A Southern Memoir*. That album comes from a batch of reissues and archival releases from Crosby's own vaults. They've been dribbling out for a while, but the series is getting a higher-profile relaunch. The music is all over the map: Bing goes Latin. Bing goes Hawaiian. Bing sings special lyrics to amuse his horse-racing and fishing buddies.

The sampler *So Rare: Treasures from the Crosby Archive* sets the tone, with its highs and lows from early and late. Rarities include an unreleased '60s single for Frank Sinatra's label where the producer squeezed Crosby into a Sinatra suit, "Don't Let a Good Thing Get Away." That wasn't a good fit for Crosby, but the best stuff in this series reminds us why we should care. Early on, he learned to swing a tune from Louis Armstrong. But the effect was way different, funneled through Crosby's buttermilk timbre and cool persona.

The CDs *Bing Sings the Great American Songbook* and *Bing on Broadway* are the crème de la crème, sparked by a briskly efficient radio rhythm section and made without corporate input. For their marathon recording sessions of tunes to be played on Crosby's 1950s CBS radio show, pianist Buddy Cole's quartet worked up quick and quirky arrangements of pop evergreens, informed by Nat Cole's tight piano-guitar combo and some recent Fred Astaire jazz records.

The Mosaic label put out a big box of these 1950s Crosby sides three years ago, but these single-disc songbooks deserve good homes. The breezy settings are a perfect fit for Crosby, who's caught at the perfect time; excellent recording puts you right in the room. Past 50, Crosby was still in fine voice, and had since purged his style of mannerisms that made him easy to poke fun at. The musicians thought like radio actors, taking on a variety of roles in short order. Buddy Cole kept piano, celeste and organ within reach, sometimes playing two at a time.

Bing Crosby's influence on modern singing is so huge, we barely notice it anymore. It spread out through deadpan crooners like Perry Como, folksy colloquialists like Johnny Mercer and warm, sexy baritones like Billy Eckstine. Later singers who effectively undersell a song are indebted, too, like Nick Drake and Leonard Cohen. Jazz singing could use a fresh dose of Crosby's influence, after so many swaggering baby Sinatras. Bring on the baby Bings.

Kevin Whitehead

The Crosby radio shows which had been heard at weekly intervals on the *SiriusXM* 40s on 4 channel stopped abruptly without notice in March. However

readers may remember that Arne Fogel, in association with Robert Bader, Bing Crosby Enterprises and *SiriusXM* radio created two excellent special radio programs called "Bing's Basement" for Sirius XM radio's Holiday listeners last December. The programs featured a collection of outtakes and rare items. Arne, Robert Bader, and BCE have now created 12 more non-holiday episodes of the series for *SiriusXM* listeners. These monthly episodes commenced on July 4 and we shall have a full report in our next issue. If these are as good as the first two, we are in for a rare treat!

Arne Fogel's own Saturday night radio program "The Bing Shift" is broadcast at 7 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN. and it can be picked up internationally, via the KBEM-JAZZ 88 website (http://jazz88.mpls.k12.mn.us/).

Rich Conaty's long-running "The Big Broadcast" show from New York on WFUV puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight (ET) and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet.

TV highlights - UK

Not too much to report on the TV scene in the UK and the only films shown were:

Anything Goes (1956)	TCM
Grace Kelly	Sony Movies
Son of Paleface	Dave
The Greatest Show on Earth	Film4
The Road to Hong Kong	TCM
Two Tickets to Broadway	BBC2

Grace Kelly was the 1983 biopic made for TV starring Cheryl Ladd as Grace. One scene shows "Bing Crosby" filming a scene with "Grace" for *The Country Girl*.

Two Tickets to Broadway is the 1951 film where Bob Crosby sings "Let's Make Comparisons" to a Bing Crosby dummy.

The Legendary Bing Crosby programme popped up several times on Sky Arts2 too.

The 1943 Sinatra film *Higher and Higher* was shown on BBC2 early one morning in June and this contained a nice Crosby crack. Frank and Marcy McGuire are singing "I Saw You First" and towards the end of the song, Frank tips Marcy on to the ground from the bike they were sharing, leading Marcy to say "From now on, I'll listen to Crosby."

UK radio

The National Presenters

Russell Davies on his excellent BBC Radio2 show on Sunday links many songs as he considers the work of various songwriters and musicians. He often finds a reason to include Bing and we heard songs such as "From Monday On" "Louise", "Love Won't Let You Get Away" and "I Love You, Samantha" amongst others. Russell mentioned that *High Society* was the first film he saw two nights running. He also played "Three Little Words" by the Rhythm Boys and told the story of how it was featured in the Duke Ellington film *Check and Double Check*. Russell reminded his listeners that Bing made a solo record with the Duke (the incredible "St. Louis Blues") and commented that the reason Ellington did not hire any other male singers in the 1930s was because he could not get anyone who could sing to Bing's standard.

Bing sings "I Love You, Samantha" as he dresses.

Clare Teal, who follows Russell, chimes in only occasionally with a Crosby song but she did play "I Ain't Got Nobody" for Bing's 110th birthday.

The final hour on BBC Radio2 on Sunday nights is still being taken by **David Jacobs** and whilst the old groaner has been heard quite frequently it seems that many of the shows are repeats.

Michael Parkinson has had a Tuesday night BBC Radio2 show in recent months called "Michael Parkinson: My Favourite Things" and he dedicated one episode to the music of Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn. Bing duly popped up with "Swinging on a Star" and "Sunshine Cake" in this. In his broadcast on June 4, Michael played his favourite duet, which was Bing and Frank singing "Well, Did You Evah!", commenting at the end that you almost see them in the film when you hear them sing.

On other nationally networked programmes, **Desmond Carrington's** Friday night show has only played Bing once in four months! Most unlike Desmond.

The local radio presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radiocumbria) frequently featured Bing on her Saturday night shows (10pm-midnight). Requests and Anne's own eclectic taste produced no less than 38 Crosby songs in the 4-month period ranging from "I'm Building a Sailboat of Dreams" to "The House Jack Built for Jill" and on to "Hey Liley Liley Lo" (with Burl Ives). Our thanks go to Anne for all she does to keep Bing's memory alive. She continues to welcome requests by email to

anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk. There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 7 days after the initial broadcast.

Bill Rennells on his *Harmony Nights* show gets plenty of requests for Bing, especially from Crosby stalwarts Trevor and Pat Wagstaff, Stan White and Ian Lawrence. Our members ensured that the new *Bing Crosby in the Hall* CD got some plays with Ian having "One Song" broadcast and Trevor succeeding with "Everything Happens to Me". Bing's 110th birthday was marked appropriately too by our men with "I've Got the World on a String" requested by Trevor and "My Buddy" played for Stan. In all, Bill played 22 songs in the 16-week period under review. Many thanks, Bill! *Harmony Nights* is heard on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet for three hours starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings. This show also has a "Listen Again" option. Email Bill with your Bing requests at *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk.*

"The Late Paul Barnes", the big band and jazz oriented show hosted by **Paul Barnes** regularly features the Crosby calendar on the first Saturday of the month. In discussing the April calendar, Paul found that the CD containing the Song of the Month – "Your Socks Don't Match" – would not play, so instead he played the soundtrack version of "I Love You, Samantha". Paul was able to play "Socks" the following week though. The May calendar song, "Yes Indeed" was played without a hitch and Mr. Barnes followed this with "Basin St. Blues" for Bing's birthday. Paul forgot to bring the June calendar into the studio but he could remember that "Ain't Got a Dime to My Name" was the Song of the Month and he duly played it followed by "Moonlight Becomes You" and "Road to Morocco". Paul commented that the line "like Webster's Dictionary we're Morocco bound" must be one the cleverest lines in popular lyrics. Paul completed his Morocco theme by playing the parody version of "Road to Morocco" from the Philco show of January 29, 1947. "The Late Paul Barnes" continues to be heard for two hours over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights. The "Listen again" facility is in place for this show as well. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk for this. Paul's show is not a request programme but he is always glad to have comments and you can email these to *paul.barnes@bbc.co.uk.*

Jim Reilly's Bing show on Angel Radio (www.angelradio.co.uk) (Tuesday nights at 10:30 p.m. UK time) mounted a Bing Birthday tribute on May 3rd and 7th which resulted in a number of people phoning the studio to say how much they enjoyed the show. Jim used some of the tracks from the *Bing Crosby in the Hall* CD and gave a nice plug for the CD too. The tracks used in the tribute were:

It Might As Well Be Spring; I Get Along Without You Very Well; I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now; I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time; You're The Only Star in My Blue Heaven; I Promise You; Going My Way; All the Way; Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea; Five Foot Two Eyes of Blue; My Own True Love; One Song; I'd Climb the Highest Mountain; Little Man You've Had a Busy Day; Everything Happens to Me and Magic Is the Moonlight.

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** occasionally plays Mr. Crosby on his programme of big band swing and balladeers each Sunday from 3pm to 6pm. The songs heard varied from "Don't Fence Me In" to "Isn't This a Lovely Day" and "When My Dreamboat Comes Home". There's a "Listen again" facility too. Email requests to *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.*

Australia

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby radio show each week. Another radio programme featuring plenty of Bing is Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 and it can be heard on Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Risë Stevens died in her Manhattan home on March 20, 2013. She was 99. We shall always remember her from Bing's film *Going My Way*. As Genevieve Linden she played in a touching scene with Bing when she met him backstage at the opera. Her character had been appearing in *Carmen* at the theatre and only realised why their romantic friendship had ceased on seeing Father O'Malley's clerical garb when he removed his overcoat.

Risë Stevens meets up with an old friend in *Going My Way*.

Ms Stevens was born Risë Steenberg on June 11, 1913 in New York City to Christian and Sarah Steenberg. Her father was of Norwegian Lutheran descent and her mother was Jewish, of Polish and Russian descent. She studied at New York's Juilliard

School for three years and went on to train in Vienna. In 1938 she made her début with the Metropolitan Opera and for over two decades (until 1961) Stevens was the Met's leading mezzo-soprano and the only mezzo to command the top billing (and commensurate fees) normally awarded only to star sopranos and tenors. Risë Stevens appeared on screen in several other films including *The Chocolate Soldier* (1941) and *Carnegie Hall* (1947) and contributed her voice to the cartoon *Journey Back to Oz* in 1971. Apart from her 1944 film liaison with Father O'Malley, she guested on the *Kraft Music Hall* with Bing on October 30, 1941 and was one of the many stars alongside Mr. Crosby on the Hollywood Victory Caravan tour in 1942. In 1944 she joined him on a *Mail Call* show and on another Kraft show. Aside from many radio appearances, she also went on to appear in a number of TV movies.

In 1975 Ms. Stevens assumed the presidency of the Mannes College of Music, a small, prestigious conservatory in Manhattan. She helped the college overcome a potentially crippling budget deficit and recruited world-renowned musicians, including the pianist Vladimir Horowitz, to the faculty. Half of the proceeds from Bing's Uris concerts in 1976 went to the college. She resigned in 1978, citing intractable differences with some members of the school's board.

Bing and Risë are reunited on December 1, 1976 outside St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

In 1939, Risë Stevens married Walter Surovy, an Austrian stage and screen actor she met during her European years, after he fled the Nazis to New York. He took over the management of her career and skillfully planned publicity to move her into areas of the business they both felt would advance her career. They had one child, a son Nicholas, who followed in his father's footsteps on Broadway, TV and in film. Stevens and Surovy were together until his death in 2001.

Our own Martin McQuade had the opportunity to meet Ms Stevens at a prestigious event in 2006. He wrote about it in BING #142 and here's an extract of what he said.

"...Ms. Stevens had, in 1941, co-starred with Nelson Eddy in MGM's *The Chocolate Soldier.* The success of this motivated Louis B. Mayer to order more operatic roles for her. He was determined to fashion her into a musical Garbo. Ms. Stevens would have none of it.

However, her husband and manager, Walter Surovy, arranged for her to star in Paramount's *Going My Way.* More information was provided in the program.

It was also Walter's idea for Risë to sing the Habanera from Carmen in the hit movie Going My Way (1944) with Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald, anticipating accurately that he could force the Met into including the Gypsy in Risë's next contract, something Edward Johnson (general manager of the Met at the time) *was reluctant to do...it worked. On December 28th, 1945, Risë sang her first Met Carmen.*

So, in a way, *Going My Way* was directly responsible for Risë's signature role at the opera house.

At the conclusion of this memorable testimonial, which also included Kitty Carlisle, a radiant Ms. Stevens took the stage to express her thanks. Afterwards there was a champagne reception, at which the legend was presented with a tape of the *Kraft Music Hall* of November 23, 1944 on which she appeared. She seemed transported back in time as she was handed this treasure. She kindly signed two pieces of sheet music: the familiar one of the title song of *Going My Way*, and a rarer one of *Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby)* which prominently features her along with Bing.

She was asked to sum in one sentence how she felt about Bing.

I loved him - I simply loved him.

After a few glasses of the bubbly, the courage to speak to her again was mustered. *Ms. Stevens, I remember that you once remarked that Bing could have been an opera singer if he had wanted to.*

Oh no! Bing just wanted to do his own thing, and that was to sing in that own marvelous way of his."

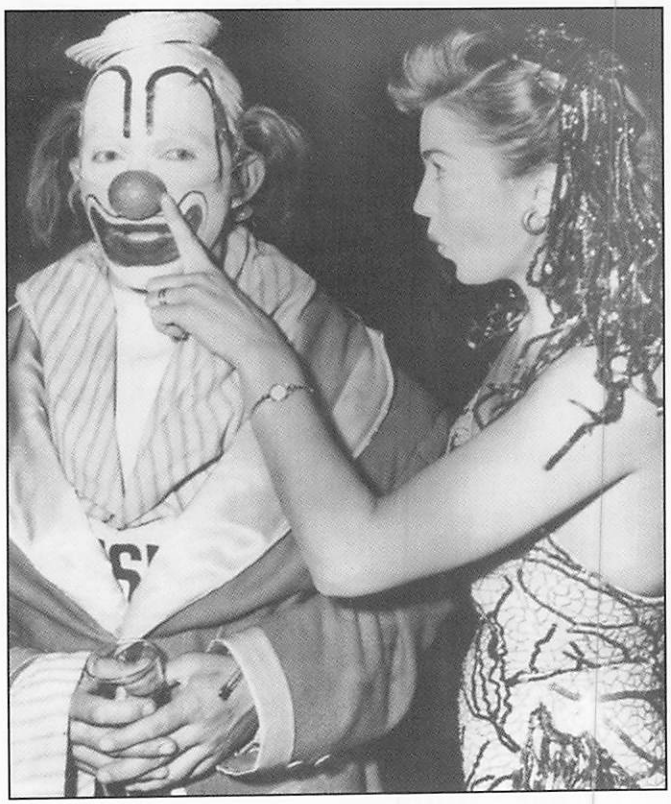
Esther Williams, a teenage swimming champion who became an enormous Hollywood star in a decade of watery MGM extravaganzas, died on June 6 in Beverly Hills, Calif. She was 91. Esther Jane Williams was born in Los Angeles on August 8, 1921, the fifth and last child of Lou and Bula Williams. Her father was a sign painter; her maternal grandparents had come west to Utah in a Conestoga wagon after the Civil War. Unwanted by a mother who was tired of raising children, Esther was turned over to her 14-year-old sister, Maurine. The family's chief breadwinner was her brother Stanton. A silent movie star at the age of 6, Stanton died of a twisted intestine when he was 16 and Esther was 8.

Then Esther learned to swim! From the beginning,

Ms. Williams wrote in her autobiography, "I sensed the water was my natural element." She counted wet towels at the neighborhood pool to earn the nickel a day it cost to swim there. The male lifeguards taught her the butterfly, a stroke then used only by men, and, at the Amateur Athletic Union championships in 1939, the butterfly won her a gold medal in the 300-meter medley relay.

MGM found Ms. Williams performing in Billy Rose's Aquacade at the San Francisco World's Fair. She was, as she put it, learning to "swim pretty" in tandem with Johnny Weissmuller, a former Olympic gold medalist who was already the star of MGM's *Tarzan* films.

From *Bathing Beauty* in 1944 to *Jupiter's Darling* in 1955, Ms. Williams swam in Technicolor pools, lakes, lagoons and oceans, cresting onto the list of Top 10 box-office stars in 1949 and 1950. "Esther Williams had one contribution to make to movies — her magnificent athletic body," the film critic Pauline Kael wrote. "And for over 10 years MGM made the most of it, keeping her in clinging, wet bathing suits and hoping the audience would shiver."



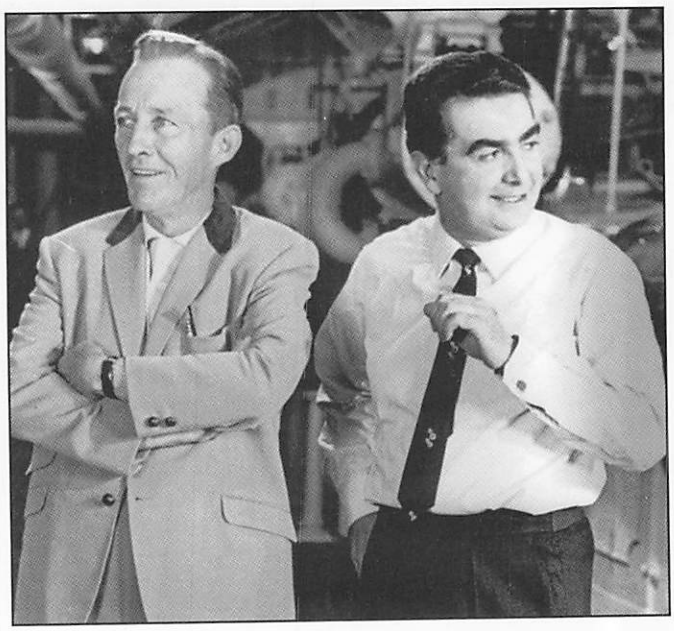
Esther admires Bing's clown's nose.

In her autobiography, "The Million Dollar Mermaid" (1999), Ms. Williams spoke of movie stardom as her "consolation prize," won instead of the Olympic gold medal for which she had yearned. At the national championships in 1939, Ms. Williams, who was 17, won three gold medals and earned a place on the 1940 United States Olympic team. But Hitler invaded Poland, and the 1940 Olympics were canceled with the onset of World War II.

She begged MGM for serious nonswimming roles, but the studio's response was, in effect, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Audiences rejected her in dramas like *The Hoodlum Saint* (1946) and *The Unguarded Moment* (1956). Her only dry-land box-office success was *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949), with Ms. Williams as the owner of a baseball team whose players included Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly (although even in that film, she was seen briefly in a swimming pool). Asked once who her favorite leading man was, Ms. Williams offered a simple and unsurprising response: "The water."

Her interaction with Bing came when she was a guest on Bing's Philco show on January 28th. 1948 and exchanged comedy dialogue with him and then took part in a sketch. Also she was one of the many stars, including Bing, taking part in the Ringling Brothers circus show on September 4, 1948 as part of a massive benefit performance for St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica. Bing dressed as a clown in the show.

Milo O'Shea, the Irish character actor, passed away on April 2 at the age of 86. Dublin born, O'Shea became popular in the United Kingdom as a result of starring in the BBC sitcom *Me Mammy* alongside Yootha Joyce. In 1967-68 he appeared in the drama *Staircase*, co-starring Eli Wallach and directed by Barry Morse, which stands as Broadway's first depiction of homosexual men in a serious light. For his role in that drama, he was nominated for a Tony Award in 1968. O'Shea starred as Leopold Bloom in Joseph Strick's 1967 film version of *Ulysses*. Among his other memorable film roles in the 1960s were as the well-intentioned Friar Laurence in Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* and as the villainous Dr. Durand Durand (who tries to kill Jane Fonda's character by making her literally die of pleasure) in Roger Vadim's counterculture classic *Barbarella* (both films were released in 1968). He was active in American films and TV, such as his memorable supporting role as the trial judge in the Sidney Lumet directed movie *The Verdict* with Paul Newman. The connection with Bing? He was one of the guests in Bing's 1967 TV special *A Little Bit of Irish* and sang "McNamara's Band" with him and Dermot O'Brien.



Milo O'Shea with Bing in the Guinness factory in Dublin.

Rosario "Sod" Vaccaro, a founding member of the singing group, The Four Aces, passed away peacefully on April 5, aged 90. The Four Aces were an American male quartet and they amassed several gold records, including "Love is a Many-Splendored Thing", "Three Coins in the Fountain", "Stranger in Paradise", "Tell Me Why", "(It's No) Sin" and "Perfidia". The group worked with Bing twice on his GE show in February 1954 singing "Heart of My Heart" and "Tell Me Why" with him. The original members, responsible for every song made popular by the group, included Al Alberts, Dave Mahoney, Lou Silvestri, and "Sod" Vaccaro. Alberts left the group in 1958 and was soon followed by Mahoney and Vaccaro. After coming off the road, Sod Vaccaro opened a pizza shop, a lifelong dream. He was later selected by the City of Chester to serve as Deputy Treasurer and Chief Deputy Tax Collector. He remained in that position as a consultant after his retirement.

Bob Thompson at work with Bing in the studio.

Robert Lamar "Bob" Thompson, the arranger, composer and orchestra leader died on May 21 at the age of 88. Over the years, he worked with Bing, Judy Garland, Julie London, and even Jerry Lewis, who recorded Bob's spoof of Liberace, "Candelabra Boogie." Some of his most rewarding collaborations were with Rosemary Clooney. Bob met Rosie when he was assigned to her album with Bing, *How the West Was Won*. He went on to produce her first RCA LP, 1960's *Clap Hands, Here Comes Rosie* and then worked with her for several years. Thompson was one of the foremost composers and arrangers of what came to be known as "Space Age bachelor pad" music – tunes that allowed hi-fi buffs to turn the lights down low, mix the perfect martini and show off their tweeters and woofers. With cascading strings, upbeat rhythms and – as in his piece "Mmm Nice!" – breathy female singers, Thompson's music set a mood, but was more than mood music. Greg Van Beek interviewed Bob in May 1999 and it is well worthwhile to dig out BINGANG, winter, 1999 edition and read Greg's excellent article. Bob's admiration for Bing really comes over in Greg's piece. In addition to *How the West Was Won,* Bob worked on the singalong albums, *Holiday in Europe* and *I Wish You a Merry Christmas*. Bing can be heard talking to Bob in the tape of the abortive recording session for *Holiday in Europe.*

Johnny Smith, who died on June 11 at the age of 90, was a musician for whom the term versatile might have been coined. Although best known as a poll-winning jazz guitarist who worked with Stan Getz and Count Basie, Smith also created one of the biggest hits of pop's surf era, performed Schoenberg, accompanied Bing Crosby and played under demanding conductors Arturo Toscanini and Dimitri Mitropoulos. Born into a poor family in Birmingham, Alabama, Smith was drawn to music through hearing his foundry worker father, an amateur banjo player, having a tune with his buddies after work.

He played guitar with a locally hillbilly band, Uncle Lem and the Mountain Boys, earning $4 a night, and quit school to become a professional musician, playing at functions and fairs. Then after hearing jazz on the radio and falling in love with the freedom and spontaneity it offered, he left the Mountain Boys, formed a jazz trio and was soon attracting attention from fellow guitarists for his exceptional technique.

Johnny Smith can just be seen behind Bing at the concert at Momarkedet in Norway in 1977.

Called for military service in 1941, Smith enlisted in the US Army Air Corps. Smith returned to Portland after the war and took a job as a staff musician with the local radio station, playing theme tunes and jingles by day and guitar and trumpet in clubs by night. His boss alerted NBC HQ to his talents and Smith was offered a job in New York. Engagements with the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia and NBC Symphonies followed, as did the chance to play jazz on 52nd Street.

Soon he was leading a quintet that included Stan Getz on saxophone. Their 1952 recording of "Moonlight in Vermont" became an instant classic and marked the beginning of a 10-year association between Smith and Roost Records. Smith joined Stan Kenton and Count Basie on the road but the schedule of one-nighters – he once played a run of 71 consecutively with Basie – palled and he switched to playing sessions. For one of these in 1955 he composed a tune called "Walk Don't Run". Country guitar legend Chet Atkins heard it and recorded it and in the early 1960s surf group the Ventures happened across Atkins's version and took it into the pop charts.

In 1958 Smith's second wife, Ann, died, leaving the guitarist with a young daughter. He retreated to Colorado Springs to live a quiet family life. Mr. Smith continued to record, and sometimes performed in Colorado nightclubs, but declined almost all invitations to tour. One exception was for Bing, whom he accompanied on a tour of England in 1977. His reputation as an extraordinarily articulate guitarist, however, ensured his peers continued to refer to him with awe and both Gibson and Guild guitars made models named after him. His third wife, Sandy, predeceased him and he is survived by sons John and David and daughter Kim.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Bing was a frequent visitor to Canada and always felt "at home" from coast to coast in the 'land of the red maple leaf'. He had many long-time Canadian friends and as an active sportsman enjoyed fishing, hunting and golfing across Canada. The landscape of his native Washington State shares a common heritage and way of life with its northern Canadian neighbour the province of British Columbia.

During the tapings of my lengthy conversations with Bing, he spoke with affection about Canada and its people. "I'm very fond of my relationship with people in Canada. I have very dear friends in Western and Eastern Canada. I've fished and hunted in most parts of Canada and have come to love the country and I hope to go there a great deal more in the future".

Bing's Canadian travels were extensive. "Certain parts I've never been to including Manitoba. I have been in the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan shooting partridge and sharp tailed grouse in and around Swift Current and in Alberta, where *The Emperor Waltz* was filmed in beautiful Jasper National Park."

His eastern travels often took him to the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. "I fished a lot around Sept Isle and have visited friends in Montreal." He also had long-time friends in Toronto where he hosted the annual Canadian Easter Seals TV special. (BING, Winter 2012.)

Of all the times in his life as an active sportsman his most memorable were often as an ardent fisherman on a sunny day by a flowing stream. "When the water's clear, and the fish are hungry, the background attractive, I don't think there is anything like it in the world. The thrill after you've fished for some time, minutes, maybe hours, to suddenly feel that strike and see the fish jumping. And then there's the run. It is probably the greatest sports' kick that I ever recall getting".

Bing and Louis Armstrong's ageless anthem for all anglers, "Gone Fishin'" was recorded April 25, 1951. It was written by Nick and Charles Kenny who also penned "Love Letters in the Sand". The warm affection that Louis and Bing had for one another was never more evident than in their easy and amusing exchanges on radio and television. I savour one of those moments when the loveable Louis, sitting beside Bing, gently slapped his knee and said for all to hear, "I love that Pappa Bing!"

Gord interviews Kathryn.

Although his extensive travels had taken Bing across North America he had never been to Ottawa my home since 1954. "No", he said ruefully, "I've never been there and I want to go some time soon. It's very picturesque up there – and it's the Capital." His very busy schedule thereafter with his 50th Anniversary Concerts in London and New York, TV appearances and recording sessions, kept him from visiting with us and his countless Ottawa fans. At that time I had been hopeful that arrangements could be made to bring his 50th Anniversary Concert to our world class National Arts Centre. Sadly our hopes were dashed when he

succumbed to a fatal heart attack on that sad, fatal day on a golf course in Spain.

In 1983 Kathryn Crosby made the trip to Ottawa that Bing had planned on making. Her impressive autobiographical book "My Life with Bing" had just been released and my wife Elaine and I warmly welcomed her to Ottawa. We had the pleasure of dining with her and being her tour guides and introducing her to our friends and associates. While enjoying lunch at one of our favourite restaurants we had a "Going My Way" nostalgia moment. One of our cleric friends of Irish ancestry stopped by our table to meet and welcome Kathryn to Ottawa. In the background I could almost hear the soothing strains of "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral".

At that time one of my long-time radio sponsors was one of Ottawa's largest department stores. A remote broadcast took place and Kathryn was my very special guest. The cameras clicked as she signed copies of the book for appreciative Crosby fans and admirers.

On the inside opening page of our copy of "My Life with Bing" she graciously signed, "To Elaine and Gordon – you have made my trip to Ottawa a joy. May you live forever in 'True Love', Kathryn".

Bing's presence was warmly felt throughout those memorable days with Kathryn in Ottawa.

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: Gord's wonderful radio series, "The Crosby Years" remains available from him — see Trading Post for details.)

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what was happening in years gone by.

75 YEARS AGO

From May 23 until July 1938, Bing filmed *Paris Honeymoon* for Paramount with Franciska Gaal, Shirley Ross, Edward Everett Horton, and Akim Tamiroff. The film was directed by Frank Tuttle with musical direction by Boris Morros.

Alongside his filming work, Bing's *Kraft Music Hall* shows continued every week until July 21 and a notable first was the appearance of Bob Hope on the show on July 14. Hope described this in one of his books.

> Then Bing put me on his Kraft radio show, and when I got my own Pepsodent show on radio, I invited him. Radio was the big thing in those days. The audience was tremendous. Bing had a remarkable ability to double as a straight man or a comedian. He had a marvelous touch, with exquisite timing. In show business, there's a sharp delineation between a comedian and a comic. A comic does broad comedy, with pratfalls and all. A comedian is a line comic—doing lines and stanza and talking straight to people. Jack Benny, for example, was the consummate comedian. He could take anyone on the stage and make them funny, by his subtle reactions to the audience from a line. Timing, it's all timing. Bing had the same faculty. He could feed a line, and respond to it, and like I say, the chemistry between us was perfect.
> (Bob Hope, *Confessions of a Hooker*, page 130)

Bing also had several recording sessions during the period under review and as usual his efforts were well received.

> It is doubtful whether a more satisfying vocal record of "Now It Can Be Told" will be heard than Brunswick 02646. One Bing Crosby is responsible for it. Yes, the same fellow who never fails to intrigue us month after month. The coupling 'When You Dream About Hawaii' is almost of the 'Sweet Leilani' standard and that is praise enough.
> *(The Gramophone*, November 1938)

Bing with some of his Westwood Marching & Chowder Club members.

On the social side, the regular meetings of the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club, North Hollywood branch were continuing. One of them took place at Bing's home on June 25. Guests included Johnny Mercer, Andy Devine, Fred MacMurray, Bill Frawley, Bette Davis, Shirley Ross, Wesley Ruggles, Edmund Lowe, and Skeets Gallagher. Bing sang "Nobody" and a duet of "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean" with Johnny Mercer. A small band was also brought in that included Tommy Dorsey and Spike Jones. A tent was erected over the tennis court for the event which went on until dawn. All guests were asked to come in costume. A recent book by Philip Furia looked at the occasion.

> The highlight of this second show, however, was a duet between Crosby and Mercer that Mercer had written as a blackface parody of the old ethnic vaudeville act "Mr Gallagher and Mr. Shean." As "Lasses Mercer" and "Chitlins Crosby," he and Bing provided an "erudite analyseration of swing." Crosby had recently been given an honorary degree by Gonzaga University in his hometown of Spokane. Washington, and Mercer addresses him with mock deference as Crosby hums and scats:
>
> "Oh, Mr. Crosby, Dear Dr. Crosby,

Is it true that swing's another name for jazz?" ...While other numbers in the show were merely in-circle fun, this duet "dazzled the audience" with its "smooth-running wit." Within a week, Crosby and Mercer made a recording, and it became one of the big hits of 1938, with *Time* magazine calling "Mr. Crosby and Mr. Mercer" the "summer's most amusing ditty." The recording rekindled Mercer's singing career, which had languished since he'd left Paul Whiteman.
(*Skylark: The Life and Times of Johnny Mercer*, p106)

On June 27, press comment suggested that Bing owed $400,000 in back taxes. He had borrowed heavily to help set up the Del Mar racetrack and the opening day of the 1938 Del Mar season took place on July 29. Saturday morning radio shows from Del Mar were aired on NBC with Bing usually participating in order to advertise the track. After the completion of the day's racing on August 5, the film *Sing You Sinners* was premiered at Del Mar. The next day, Bob Hope joined Bing on stage in the Saturday night shows at Del Mar reviving their patter from the Capitol Theater in 1932.

Bing and his partner Lin Howard owned a horse called 'Ligaroti' and to further attract punters to the track, a purse of $25,000 was offered for a race between 'Ligaroti' and the legendary horse "Seabiscuit". The race took place on August 12 and Bing described it in his autobiography.

> The crowd began to yell the moment the horses broke and they never stopped yelling all the way around. . . They turned for home head and head, and they finished that way with both jockeys batting at each other with their whips and grabbing at each other's saddle cloths. At the wire the picture showed Seabiscuit a winner by a whisker. Although there has always been a dispute as to whether that picture was read properly.
>
> Be that as it may, they broke every track record en route. They broke the record for the half mile, the three-quarter mile, the mile, and the mile and an eighth. . . . There was an awful stew about the jockeys' deportment and track manners. The judges claimed that our jockey was at fault. They ruled him off for thirty days and gave him a fine, which we paid. But they didn't know that I had a movie of the race made and I ran it off for Mr. Howard. In the film it was clear that Richardson was no more to blame than Georgie Woolf. Nothing will be gained by post morteming about which Jock hit the other horse across the nose with his whip, thus starting the fracas. But once it started, they both grabbed clothing and saddle blankets, and from the sixteenth pole home, it was a melee, a pier sixer on horseback.
>
> We lost the race and lost the money. But to see two fine horses put on performances like that was worth the money. It is certainly one of my most treasured performances of Del Mar.
> (Bing Crosby, *Call Me Lucky*, page 240)

The New York premiere of Bing's film *Sing You Sinners* took place on August 16 and the critics liked it.

> The happily accidental conjunction of Bing Crosby and horse racing (which is Bing's other love, besides crooning, as you may have read somewhere) has turned out to be the funniest comedy on Broadway, including all the side streets. The only noteworthy difference between reality and *Sing You Sinners* at the Paramount, is that in the movies Crosby's horse wins—an unprecedented thing which may be explained by the fact that Bing undoubtedly must have had a hand in the script....Claude Binyon's story and Wesley Ruggles' direction are swell, and the two principal songs, "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams" and "Don't Let That Moon Get Away" are already being whistled about town. Incidentally, that's another thing we like about *Sing You Sinners*: not too much singing.
> (Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, August 18, 1938)

> A new and interesting Bing Crosby emerges in *Sing You Sinners*, a likeable ne'er-do-well who believes that the secret of success lies in taking gambles. He is less the crooner, and, for added relief of tiring Crosby fans, if any, less of a delight for fluttering maidenly hearts. Instead, he's something of a pain in the neck to a forgiving mother and two brothers. Crosby and a small but good cast combine with an excellent story and good direction for surefire box office. . . . Crosby plays his part strongly but with restraint.
> (*Variety*, August 17, 1938)

50 YEARS AGO

1963 was a quiet year for Bing's show business activity. His major operation in January had slowed him down and he spent much time at his Las Cruces home.

The TV show he had filmed in England in 1961 was transmitted in the USA in December of that year but it was not shown in the UK until early in 1963. It was an edited version which omitted two scenes and the poor quality of the film led British Crosby Society member Stan White to write to Bing about it. Bing dutifully replied from Las Cruces on April 27 and the letter was reproduced in *Crosby Post* of June 1963.

> I appreciate very much your long and informative letter of April 14th. There was a great deal of news in there, and I'm sure that I'll profit by some of the things you had to say.
>
> Yours is not the first complaint about the quality of the television show. Unhappily once it is sent over there, it's completely out of our hands, and we have no control over what is done in the way of editing.
>
> The lack of photographic quality though, baffles me. I don't know why this should be. Practically every show in America is on tape - very few live shows anymore - and they're all replayed; some of them many times, and in no case within my memory have there been any appreciable loss of quality.
>
> I must tell you that I know absolutely nothing about

the technical end of this business - how tapes are made, how they are dubbed or duplicated – so I can't be very helpful in trying to supply any answers.

I am turning your letter, however, over to people in charge here, and maybe they can do something about it, although I have resorted to them in the past without any appreciable success.

Doubtless there is much material in the old radio shows which I did with Buddy Cole and with Rosemary Clooney which could be made into LPs. We've often thought of this, and I'm going to get a project activated that will probably lead toward doing just that.

...Please give my best to Murphy and Gaylor and all the other people who are so loyal to me and so helpful too.

Believe me to be – your friend,
Bing

Bing obviously did pass the complaint on and it was Larry Crosby who soon wrote to Les Gaylor saying:

"Regarding the poor quality of some of the television shows, we have found that you can not get good quality putting tape on film, and have discontinued doing so. From tape to picture to negative to picture creates a four time diffusion. We hope Britain will come up to tape, it's faster, longer lasting, safer and less costly."

In April, Bing Crosby Enterprises sold the stock of Project Records (not the masters) to Capitol Records. Bing's sons Lindsay and Phillip were divorced by their wives and Bing pulled out of the proposed Warner Brothers' film *The Devil's Advocate* which he had been keen to do.

In June his brother Everett had his left leg amputated because of poor circulation complicated by diabetes. Bing phoned his brother Ted and asked him to visit Everett. Ted and his wife duly did so with Bing picking up the costs of the trip. On June 16, Kathryn Crosby graduated as a nurse from the Queen of Angels School of Nursing and Bing attended the commencement ceremony at the Cathedral of St. Bibiana in Los Angeles.

On July 19, Frank Sinatra announced that Bing had signed to make recordings for his company, Reprise Records. It was Bing's first major recording agreement since his contract with Decca ended and he was quickly to work recording "Fugue for Tinhorns" and "The Oldest Established" with Sinatra and Dean Martin for the Reprise "Repertory Theater" album of *Guys and Dolls*. Kathryn Crosby mentioned this in one of her books.

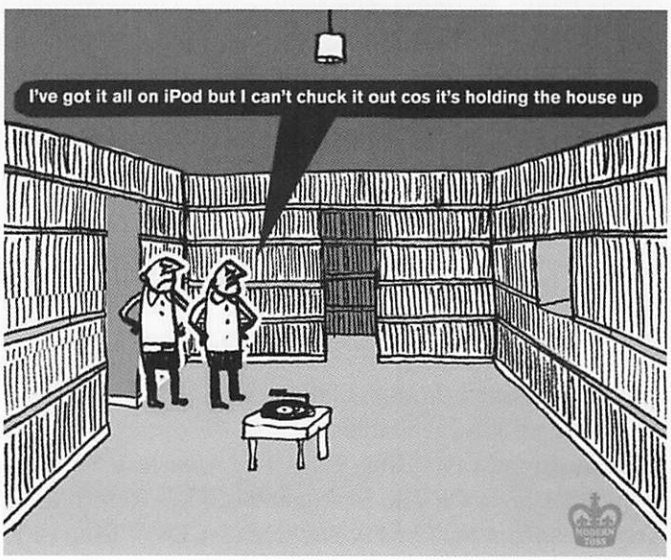
Meanwhile, as one professional to another, Bing wrote about a recording session with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin:

"The great one had hired a forty-five piece orchestra, a vast cadre of vocalists, and four arrangers and conductors for our songs from the Broadway musicals *Guys and Dolls, South Pacific,* and *Kiss Me Kate.* Dean and I watched in bemused bewilderment while Sinatra organized, conducted, arranged, and criticized everything. After finishing two sides, Frank, who had spent the night on the town, averred that his reed was tired and dismissed the vast assembly. We had been there less than an hour and a half, a far cry from the old days when I used to record five or six hours with a four-piece band in a warehouse in downtown Los Angeles."
(Kathryn Crosby, *My Life with Bing*)

Frank Sinatra directs operations in the recording studio while Bing looks on.

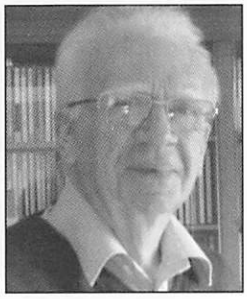
Bing made further recordings for Reprise during August 1963 including part of the *Return to Paradise Islands* album with an orchestra conducted by Nelson Riddle.

On August 23, Bing was in St. Paul, Minnesota, for a meeting with representatives of Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing. At a press conference at the White Bear Yacht Club, he promoted their "Beat Bing Contest" (a golfing challenge with the winners to play in Bing's pro-am). He stated that close to two million rounds of golf have been played since August 4 by golfers across the nation who were seeking to beat his score. During the press conference, he was presented with a copy of the baptism certificate of his mother, who was born nearby in Stillwater. Bing was surprised to find that his mother was three years younger than he had thought.



KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker looks at the new releases



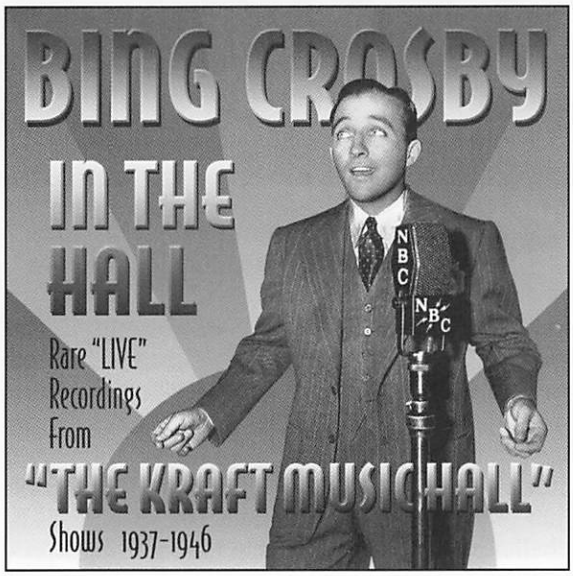
Welcome to Richard Baker as he takes a look at the new releases.

For over ten years Ken Crossland has been responsible for this column, following a line which includes, in modern times, Derek Parkes and Jim Reilly, with Malcolm Macfarlane doubling up with his role as editor for a period from 2001. I was honoured to be asked by Malcolm to take on the role. I hope I can adequately fill their shoes.

COMPACT DISCS

Bing Crosby in the Hall **SEPIA 1224** **£6 / $15**

The Kraft Music Hall Shows 1937-1946 Also available as a download



1. Josephine (28 Oct 1937) 2. Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon (28 Apr 1938) 3. One Song (5 May 1938) 4. The Umbrella Man (23 Feb 1939) 5. Penny Serenade (2 Mar 1939) 6. I Get Along Without You Very Well (23 Mar 1939) 7. Honolulu (23 Mar 1939) 8. You're the Only Star in My Blue Heaven (30 Mar 1939) 9. I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now (19 Oct 1939) 10. Scatter-Brain (16 Nov 1939) 11. Looking at the World Through Rose-Coloured Glasses (7 Dec 1939) 12. (Back Home Again In) Indiana (14 Dec 1939) 13. I Thought About You (1 Feb 1940) 14. Ma! (She's Making Eyes at Me) (9 May 1940) 15. Angel in Disguise (16 May 1940) 16. Let's Be Buddies (21 Nov 1940) 17. Because of You (12 Jun 1941) 18. Everything Happens to Me (12 Jun 1941) 19. I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time (30 Apr 1942) 20. You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To (24 Dec 1942) 21. Hit the Road to Dreamland (18 Feb 1943) 22. I've Got Sixpence (12 Aug 1943) 23. How Sweet You Are (2 Dec 1943) 24. The Surrey with the Fringe on Top (2 Mar 1944) 25. Saturday Night (Is the Loneliest Night in the Week) (8 Feb 1945) 26. Magic Is the Moonlight (1 Mar 1945) 27. My Dreams Are Getting Better All the Time (10 May 1945) 28. It Might As Well Be Spring (28 Feb 1946) 29. Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief (7 Mar 1946) 30. G'bye Now (20 Mar 1941)

Sepia here keep up their high standards of presentation, with a 12 page booklet containing notes by Editor Malcolm and mastering by Geoff Milne. The sound quality is as good as you can get from radio material of the era. The choice of material is mainly based on the inclusion of songs not recorded by Bing at the time for commercial release, and my own reaction is to wonder why so many titles that Bing had presented so well on radio were not then commercially recorded. The songs are in chronological order (apart from the final track) and this alone builds up a nice impression of Bing's progress over the ten years covered. A most enjoyable issue. I find that much of the radio material benefits from a feeling of immediacy engendered by odd bits of unrehearsed quirks – a suppressed chuckle in "Looking at the World Through Rose-Coloured Glasses" and the fact that the music almost runs away from Bing in "Josephine" for example, which would probably not have been passed in commercial takes. Many of these tracks were available many years ago on LPs from the likes of Spokane, but it is great to have them now in such good sound on CD.

UNIVERSAL HLC REISSUES

The "Stop Press" page inserted in BING #163 contained some really important news - the reissue by Universal Music Enterprises, by arrangement with HLC Properties Ltd, (for the Crosby estate), of all but one of the CDs previously issued through Collector's Choice.

These are all now available and are –

Bing on Broadway - Bing Sings The American Songbook - Bing Sings The Sinatra Songbook

El Señor Bing - On The Sentimental Side - Return to Paradise Islands – Seasons - Southern Memoir - So Rare: Treasures from the Crosby Archive (2-CDs) - Bing & Rosie: The Crosby –Clooney Radio Sessions (2-CDs)

Track listings are included in Ken Crossland's original reviews in BING #155 and #157

The current reissues are completed by "Bing in Dixieland" (track listing in BING #160) originally issued after the termination of the Collector's Choice arrangement.

Prices I have seen range widely but are typically £9 / £10 (UK) $9 / $12 (US) for the single CDs and £12 (UK) $20 (US) for the doubles, but can be found for considerably less at discount specialists, particularly in the US.

"The Crosby Christmas Sessions" also released originally though Collector's Choice, is not included amongst the current reissues but the original remains available both from "The Home of Bing Crosby" and other online sources. I imagine it might just be slated for re-issue at a more seasonal moment.

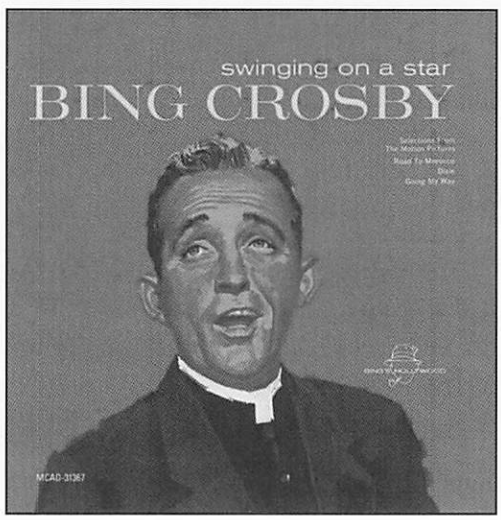
The Universal versions have subtle changes to the sleeve artwork but they are in all essentials identical to the originals and the "digipak" format has been maintained. (You will only want both if you take the stamp collector's approach to record sleeves, wanting all varieties of colour and typography).

I would think that this new development must result in wider and easier availability of the CDs and on that ground alone must be welcomed, but better still is a press release which stated that it is intended to release six new CDs and one DVD a year. There is certainly a great deal of material available in those "vaults" originating from tracks recorded for radio, and not just with Buddy Cole.

All are available as downloads.

The Bing Crosby CBS Radio Recordings 1954 – 1956 **Mosaic Records** **$119**
See BING #154
Not new, but the news is that stocks are exhausted. In consequence I see silly and highly opportunistic prices demanded on the internet. This is unjustified because at the time of writing Mosaic shows it as available on "back order" with new deliveries promised for the second half of 2013, which suggests that it could be available again by the time you read this. The issue was and remains billed as a limited edition of 20,000 copies. I don't imagine that assurance is being broken so assume that it is a batch representing part of the 20,000 that has been exhausted. If you have not already got this beautiful 7 CD set, I suggest get your order in but don't get fooled into paying any more than the official price (and if you go to the right place you might yet get it for less).

Swinging on a Star **Geffen Records** **$11:57 (US)** Also available as a download.



1. Road to Morocco 2. Moonlight Becomes You 3. Ain't Got a Dime to My Name (Ho Ho Ho Ho Hum) 4. Constantly 5. Sunday, Monday or Always 6. If You Please 7. Going My Way 8. Swinging on a Star 9. The Day After Forever 10. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's An Irish Lullaby) 11. Ave Maria 12. Silent Night

In the mid 1990s MCA issued three CDs from the original sequence of 15 LPs titled "Bing's Hollywood". Now Geffen have released one of them afresh covering titles from the movies "Road to Morocco" and "Going My Way". A welcome return though most will have the tracks and it is rather short measure these days. A review on Amazon reminds us that these are not soundtrack recordings but recordings made contemporaneously in the studio for issue on record. That was the way things were usually done with film musicals in those days.

Amazon UK lists an identically titled CD with the same cover, but it has 18 almost wholly different tracks.

Gus Arnheim – In Hollywood 1928-1933 - Renovation Records - $27:09 (US) (Amazon) Also available as a download.
A 2CD set with a total of 50 tracks, of which eight are with Bing, covering not quite all of his recordings with Arnheim. Many will have them but the set is of additional interest because it sets a frame around Bing and some of his contemporaries, leading to interesting contrasts of style set against the consistent background of the Arnheim band. Featured vocalists include Fred MacMurray, Russ Columbo, Donald Novis, Joan Crawford, Shirley Ross, Loyce Whiteman and others. Very enjoyable. Tracks with Bing are: -
14. Fool Me Some More 16. It Must Be True 17. The Little Things in Life 19. Thanks to You 20. One More Time 21. Ho Hum! 22. I Surrender Dear 23. I'm Gonna Get You

DVD and Blu-ray

Say One for Me **20th Century Fox Cinema Archive** **$19:98**
Available as a DVD-R made to order from Amazon. Region 1 (US and Canada)

One of the less regarded films from Bing, but some of the songs (on the recently issued CD from Sepia - see BING #163) are quite attractive.

There has been much adverse comment about the "pan and scan" transfer technique whereby elements of the widescreen original have been lost. However if you want the movie, I think this is the only current option! I know that many dislike this approach intensely, though others can't abide the alternative black bars at top and bottom brought about by "letterboxing". You are warned.

I am reliably told that the picture quality is otherwise excellent though I suspect that the copying to order approach could introduce inconsistencies.

Despite all I personally might yet get this to fill a gap on the basis that I'd prefer to have it than have the gap.

The Country Girl **Paramount** **$5:97 US (Amazon) £3:60 UK**

Region 1 (US and Canada) - Also available on "Instant Video"

A re–release (May 2013) of a DVD previously released in 2004. So far as I can establish there is no substantial difference (no extra features) but the older version is still listed by Amazon at a higher price!

I am told that the picture quality is good, though it is of course black and white. (1.33:1 ratio) Bing's peak in a dramatic role in my opinion but the Oscar honours went to Grace Kelly, concealing her natural grace and beauty and playing the dowdy wife. It is so frequently mentioned for the dramatic aspects that you have to pinch yourself to remember that there are some quite good songs there as well - "Dissertation on a State of Bliss" and "The Land Around Us" to name but two.

ON THE WEB

101 Gang Songs – Join Bing and Sing Along - Part 1 £5:49 (UK) (Amazon)

(Individual tracks also available)

Listed briefly on iTunes, only to vanish, and not listed so far as I can find on Amazon US, or elsewhere, but available from Amazon UK.

It is billed as Part 1 but in fact contains all 24 tracks of the original two LPs. As most readers will know, most of the tracks consist of a medley of three songs. Bing is backed by a rhythmic accompaniment and chorus and on some songs leaves the singing to the chorus.

Comment has been made previously about speeds for some downloads, and here, to my ears at least, the tracks with "Anchors Aweigh" and "Love's Old Sweet Song" are suspiciously slow.

There has been a rash of downloadable compilations, including (already – I'm writing this at the height of what passes for an English summer) a lot of Christmas material, with much duplication. They include one from a mysterious interloper who looks like our Bing, sings like our Bing, sings the same songs as our Bing, but spells his name COSBY. Can we be expected to take such a careless approach seriously? Most of these compilations are not worth mentioning and will only be useful for those wishing to acquire individual tracks but you take pot luck in terms of quality.

However, one which just about passes my personal filter and worth a mention is -

Elegantly Wasted **Jazz2Jazz** **$8:99 (US) (Amazon)**

1. Dream a Little Dream of Me 2. Mack the Knife 3. Don't Fence Me In 4. Exactly Like You 5. My Baby Said Yes 6. I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter 7. San Fernando Valley 8. Tell Me 9. Swinging on a Star 10. Along the Way to Waikiki 11. Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella 12. I Can't Begin to Tell You 13. Last Night on the Back Porch 14. I Love You 15. Some Sunny Day 16. It's Been a Long, Long Time 17. The Road to Morocco 18. Whispering 19. Sunday, Monday or Always 20. (There'll Be A) Hot Time in the Town of Berlin 21. Moonlight Becomes You 22. Mama Loves Papa 23. Only Forever 24. Down Among the Sheltering Palms 25. I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams 26. Remember Me

This is essentially "Bing with a Beat" from 1957 accompanied by Bob Scobey intermixed with tracks from the 1940s. Quite attractive as a selection and audio is quite good but I can't imagine what the title is meant to imply.

Whilst on matters Internet, I was intrigued to note a large batch of Bing material on eBay (UK) offered by the son of a deceased collector. Included were large quantities of BING magazine from pre 1989, many photos, "Bing Talks" from the BingThings Society, material from The Bing Crosby Photo Club and much else. Now the interesting fact was that every single item had attracted a bid – the copies of BING magazine all of a minimum of £3:99 each, "Bing

Talks" of £2:99 each, with many of the successful final bids frequently much more, many going to the same final purchaser. Are you reading this? Who are you?

Richard Baker **bakerstonb@gmail.com**

(Editor: Well done, Richard! The CD "Bing Crosby in the Hall" was reviewed on the Amazon site by our member Anton Garcia-Fernandez and whilst we don't have enough space to reproduce all of his comprehensive review, members might like to read this extract.

"*...Inevitably, some of the material that Bing sang on the Kraft show was not up to the high standards of his own talent, but he never fails to put across even weak songs such as Kay Kyser's "The Umbrella Man." It is hard for me to name favorites on this CD, since every track is interesting for different reasons, and Bing's interpretations are always appealing, whether he be singing a ballad or an uptempo number. However, highlights of this compilation definitely include "I Get Along Without You Very Well" (written by Hoagy Carmichael), "I Thought About You" (a classic from the pen of Johnny Mercer), the old favorite "Looking at the World Through Rose-Colored Glasses," "Indiana," "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to" (written by Cole Porter), and a wistful version of "It Might as Well Be Spring." Incidentally, this radio version of Mercer's "I Thought about You" certainly rivals Frank Sinatra's classic rendition on his Songs for Swingin' Lovers album. Crosby also tackles Sinatra's early hit "Saturday Night (Is the Loneliest Night of the Week)" with conviction and turns in lovely readings of "Because of You" (which would become a big hit for Tony Bennett in 1951), Cole Porter's "Let's Be Buddies" (in a duet with Connee Boswell), Gene Autry's gentle country ballad "You're the Only Star in My Blue Heaven," and Irving Berlin's rather obscure early composition "Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon."*

The excellent British label Sepia has collaborated closely with the International Club Crosby for this release, and the illustrated booklet that accompanies the CD includes well-written, informative liner notes by Malcolm Macfarlane, editor of BING Magazine, complete with a brief discussion of each of the tracks. Considering the age of these recordings, preserved on 10- and 12-inch acetates stored in John Scott Trotter's cellar and later transferred to tape, the sound quality of the CD is magnificent and has been efficiently restored. This is yet another outstanding Crosby release from Sepia that will definitely make Bing fans like me very happy. Hopefully it will sell well enough that the label will decide to turn 'Bing in the Hall' into a full-blown series like their 'Through The Years' batch of releases. There certainly is enough material to grant such a series, and we would all benefit from it."

Thanks, Anton, for an excellent appraisal of this CD. We'll talk to Richard Tay at Sepia about possible future issues of KMH material. The Universal HLC reissues garnered a fair amount of coverage too and *Jazz Weekly* had the following review by George W. Harris on June 27:

BEFORE FRANK, THERE WAS...Bing Crosby: Bing Sings the Great American Songbook, Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook, Bing in Dixieland

If you're a fan of pure singing, no attitude, no glitz, just a perfect sense of time, swing and style, it's hard to find someone better than the gent who essentially started the genre, namely Der Bingster, aka Bing Crosby. He and Louis Armstrong set the standard for male singers from the 20s to the late 40s when a guy named Frank Sinatra took the baton. Still, Crosby kept crooning through the 70s, never releasing anything that wasn't classy and insouciant.

Universal is releasing a bucket load of albums, some of which were actually released back in the day, others being clever thematic compilations from his various shows.

***Bing Sings the Great American Songbook** consists of material that Crosby recorded on his CBS radio programs back in the mid 50s. Backed by Buddy Cole/key and his trio of Vince Terri/g, Don Whitaker/bs and Nick Fatool/dr, Crosby is at his most intimately relaxed on these sessions as he avoids the high production or Dixieland sounds of most of his other sessions. His mellifluous baritone is warm and cozy on material like "Manhattan" and "I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plan," while the depth of his range on "Ol' Man River" is startling. This one disc is culled from a multi-disc box set from Mosaic records, so if you want to avoid forking over a C note plus, this is a great place to hear Crosby in a rare environment.*

***Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook** culls material Crosby recorded mostly from The Bing Crosby Show for General Electric in Palm Springs, CA and it has him in various settings ranging from full orchestras to the Buddy Cole band. He does some stellar versions of material associated with Ol' Blue Eyes, holding his own with takes of "Young at Heart" and "The Tender Trap." Best of all is a three song medley with Sinatra himself, where they not only trade lines on the likes of "September Song" and "As Time Goes By" but they blend them together every now and then for a heavenly sauce of baritone bliss. What a treat!!!*

***Bing in Dixieland** is a natural choice, sing Crosby was there with Bix, Tram and all the rest back in the day. The bands vary from quartets to swinging combos, with all stars like Nick Fatool, Red Nichols and Matty Matlock showing up for hopping takes of "Muskrat Ramble," "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Margie." A couple of bonus*

delights include Ella Fitzgerald showing up for a stellar take of "Memphis Blues" and Louis Armstrong and His All Stars tearing down the house with Bing on a smoking "Now You Has Jazz." Guaranteed to put a smile on that face.)

Announcement

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

48th ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

Weetwood Hall, Conference Centre & Hotel

Otley Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 5PS, UK

Telephone: 0113 230 6000

Website: www.weetwood.co.uk

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6th 2013, 2pm - 10pm

A cordial and warm invitation is extended to all members, their partners and friends to attend our forthcoming dinner meeting. This is the 48th annual dinner held in Leeds to celebrate Bing's life and times, and as usual, we shall have some interesting DVD material for you to see, using the excellent facilities at Weetwood Hall available for this purpose.

We have kept the official start time at 2 p.m. to enable us to pack more into the time we have but apart from this, some of Bing's classic songs from the 1930s and '40s will be playing from 1 p.m. onwards as part of a PowerPoint presentation of Bing photos.

A three-course Carvery Dinner will be provided. Please book by sending a cheque for £24.50 per person to Michael Crampton. Y'All Come! You will be amongst friends.

Special bed and breakfast prices of £70 (single) and £90 (double) have been agreed for ICC visitors wishing to stay overnight at Weetwood Hall. We'll have a get-together meal on the Saturday night with whoever is there.

Bing Crosby
Hollywood

Hayden Lake, Idaho
September 5, 1953

Miss Eugenie Baird
220 East 73d Street
New York, New York

Dear "Stoney":

I did receive your letter and records at the ranch, and I thought I had made reply thereto. Evidently in my increasing senility my memory is playing tricks on me, because I guess if you didn't receive a letter I couldn't have written one. I thought I had, and I seek your forgiveness.

I can't plead press of other duties or occupation with too many things, as I haven't really been doing anything since March when I went to Europe, and although we did 8 or 10 transcriptions over there, there was very little real work involved. Since returning in the middle of July I haven't done anything but ride herd on these four little monsters who bear my name.

I am presently at Hayden Lake with them, from which point we return to Hollywood on September 6 or 7 to start work on "White Christmas" - a new picture involving Danny Kaye, Clooney, Vera-Ellen and myself. So if you come to California in September we will be there and eager to see you. My home phone number is CRestview 57665 and the office - which is probably the best place to locate me - is CRestview 11171.

By the way, the records which I played at the ranch sounded very good, and your delivery and voice-handling most impressive. I can tell you more in detail about my reaction when I see you.

Hope you come to California - I think you've been away from that part of the country too long. Surely you must be sick of the effete East by now. As ever -

Your friend,

Bing

Bing Crosby

BC:rm

Designed & printed by dh3 digital ltd., Print Works, Broadwood View,
Ropery Lane, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham DH3 3NJ U.K.
Tel: +44 (0)191 387 4248 Email: dh3@live.com